



MENTORLY'S FIRST-TIME MENTORSHIP GUIDE

MENTEE EDITION

Practical guidance to showing up prepared, having honest conversations, and building a mentorship relationship that actually moves you forward.



So you're being mentored for the first time...

Mentorship is only as good as what you put into it. The best mentorship relationships don't happen by accident. They happen because someone came prepared, asked real questions, and wasn't afraid to be open about where they were struggling.

This guide is here to help you put in the right things. It will help you prepare, show up well, and keep the momentum going. You don't need all the answers. You just need to show up honestly and be willing to do the work.



Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

1. Reflect on your goals (even if they're vague at first)

Think of your first mentorship experience like building a relationship with someone who genuinely wants to help you succeed. The more you know about what you need going in, the more you will get out of it. You don't need a perfect plan, but having a direction helps your mentor support you.

- **What do I actually want?**
 - What's the biggest obstacle standing between me and my next step?
 - Where do I feel most out of my depth at work?
 - What energizes me about my work?
 - What does success look like for me in 6–9 months?
- **What do I bring to this relationship?**
 - How much time and energy can I realistically commit to this?

Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

2. Identify your learning preferences

Ask yourself:

- Do I prefer feedback in-the-moment or after reflection?
- Am I open to feedback that might be uncomfortable to hear?
- Do I learn best by talking, doing, or observing?
- How do I like to be held accountable? How will I hold myself accountable?
- What would make me feel like I'm not getting enough from this relationship?



Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

3. Prepare to share your story

A. Start with the basics

Be ready to give a brief overview of your background: where you've worked, what you've studied, and the role you're in now. Keep it to a few sentences; this isn't a job interview.

B. Think about your turning points

What moments or decisions have shaped your career so far? This could be a role you took a chance on, a setback that redirected you, or a project that showed you what you're really good at.

C. Be honest about where you are

What's going well right now, and what isn't? Mentors can only help with what they know about. The more candid you are, the more useful their guidance will be.

Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

3. Prepare to share your story (cont.)

D. Think about what makes you tick

What kind of work energizes you? What tends to drain you? Understanding your own motivations helps your mentor give advice that actually fits you, not just generic career wisdom.

E. Don't over-polish it

Your story doesn't need to be perfect or linear. Mentors aren't looking for a highlight reel, they're looking to understand you. Authenticity will take you further than a rehearsed pitch.

Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

4. Define a short list of topics you want to discuss.

Here are a few examples:

Closing a Skill Gap

"I notice the senior people on my team are great at stakeholder management, but I've never really had to do it — I'd love advice on how to start building that skill."

Navigating organizational culture

"I'm new to the company and still figuring out how decisions actually get made — the formal process and the informal one seem very different."

Confidence or Communication

"I tend to go quiet in large meetings even when I have something to contribute. I want to work on speaking up more, especially in front of senior leadership."

Leadership aspirations

"I'd like to move into a people manager role within the next couple of years, but I'm not sure what I need to demonstrate to be considered ready."

Before the First Meeting

Prepare Yourself

5. Reflect on what you expect from a mentor

Being honest about this sets you up for a healthy partnership.

- Am I looking for guidance, accountability, a sounding board, or something else?
- Do I want my mentor to challenge me, or mostly to support me?

What do I need from this mentor specifically?

- What experiences or perspectives does my mentor have that I want to learn from?
- What would I find most valuable: their network, their expertise, their story, or their honest opinion?

First Meeting

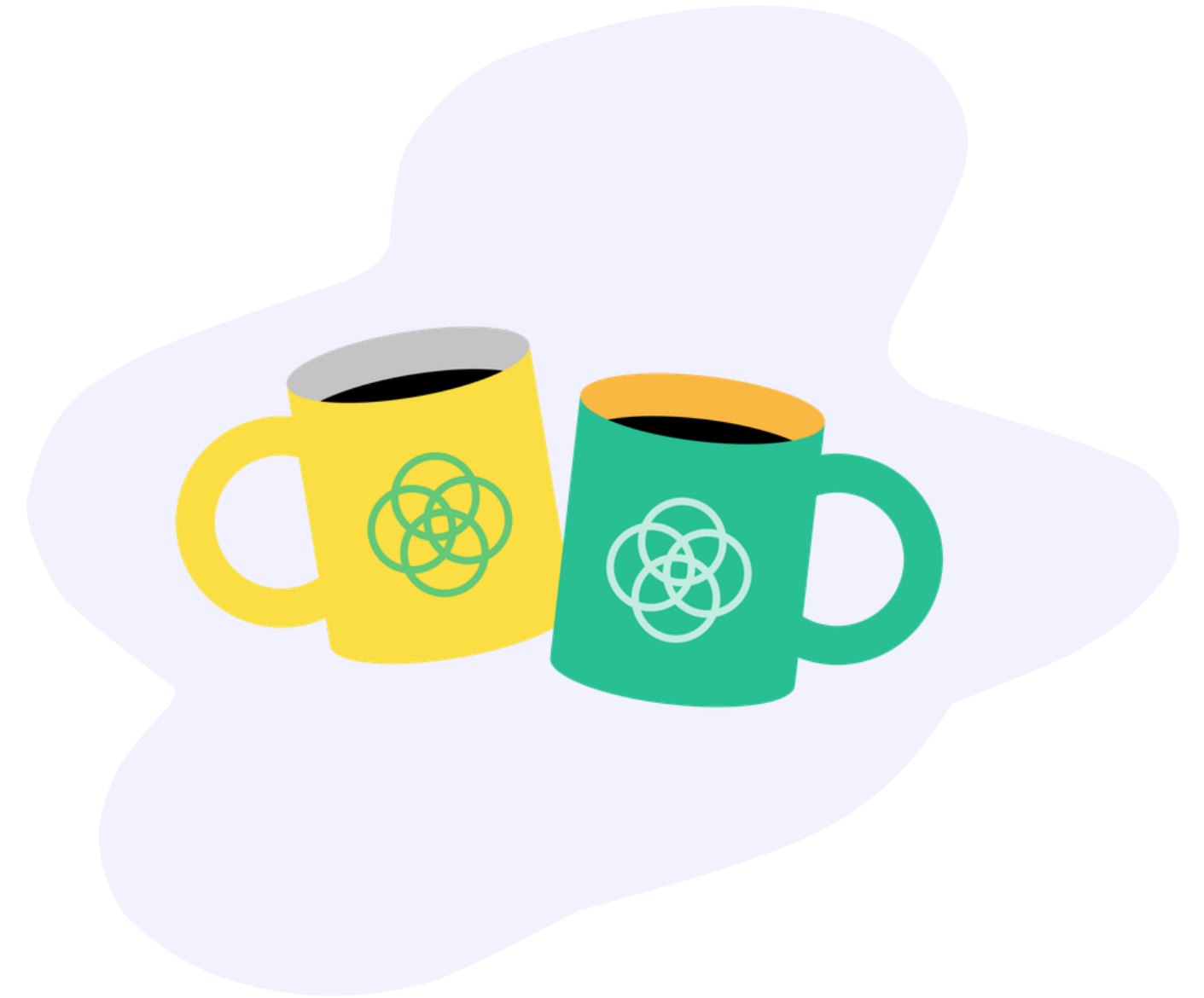
How to Approach the Conversation

1. Build rapport intentionally

Your first conversation is less about solving problems and more about connection and alignment. You don't need to dive into career dilemmas immediately.

Begin with:

- Introductions
- What energizes you at work
- Why you joined the mentorship program
- How you like to learn



First Meeting

How to Approach the Conversation

2. Share your goals — even the half-formed ones

You don't need to arrive with a polished five-year plan. A goals conversation that feels a little uncertain is often more productive than one that's been over-rehearsed. Try to cover:

- **Where you are now.** A brief, honest picture of your current reality, what's going well, and where you feel stretched.
- **Where you want to get to.** Even a rough sense of direction is useful.
- **What's getting in the way.** The obstacles, gaps, or uncertainties that feel most relevant.
- **How you'll know you're progressing.** This doesn't need to be measurable in a formal sense, but having some shared sense of what growth looks like helps you both stay oriented.



Tip

If you've done the reflection work in the previous section, this conversation will feel much more natural. Your notes from that exercise are worth bringing along.

First Meeting

How to Approach the Conversation

3. Discuss expectations transparently

Say the quiet part out loud to avoid unmet expectations. Be open about what you actually need and seek alignment on:

- **Cadence:** Weekly, biweekly, monthly? What's realistic for your schedule and your goals?
- **Communication:** Are you a "quick message between sessions" person or a "I'll save it for our next call" person? Either is fine, but your mentor should know.
- **Accountability:** Do you want someone to check in on your progress, or do you prefer to drive that yourself?
- **Support:** Do you need a sounding board? A challenger? A cheerleader? Most likely some combination, and that's worth naming out loud.



Tip

If setting expectations out loud feels awkward, try framing it as "I've been reflecting on what I'd find most useful". It invites a conversation rather than front-loading pressure.

Making the most of mentorship

How to keep driving the relationship

Great mentorship is mentee-led.

That means:

- Bringing agenda items to every meeting
- Sharing updates on the areas your mentor supported you in, and sharing the outcomes - whether positive or negative.
- Being open about obstacles faced or mistakes made along the way
- Being proactive in telling your mentor what is or isn't working



Tip

If you're ever stuck on what to bring to a session, ask yourself: what's the one thing I've been avoiding thinking about? That's usually the most important thing to discuss.

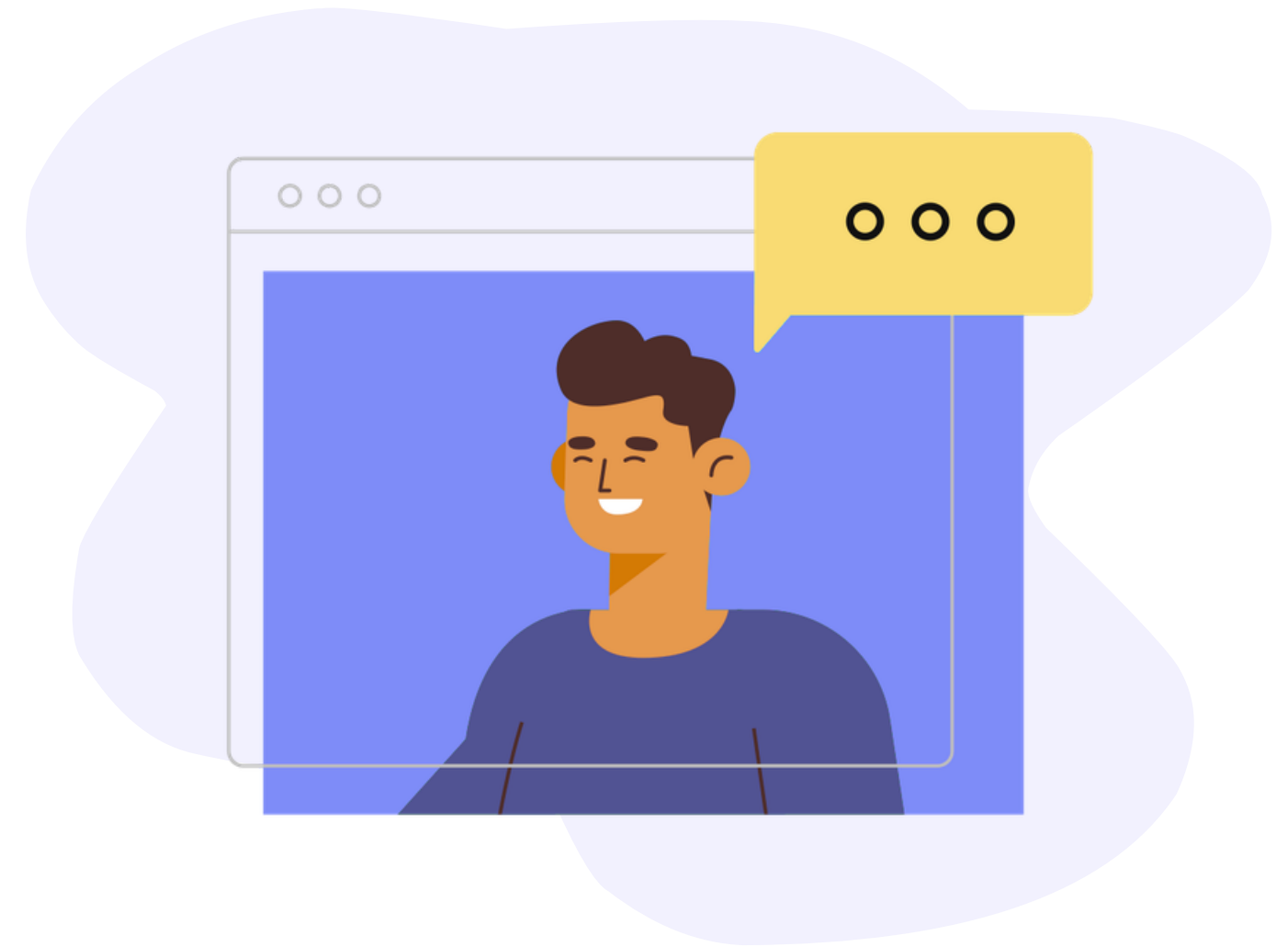
Making the most of mentorship

How to keep driving the relationship

Always leave the meeting with clarity

Make sure you end each meeting knowing:

- The top 1–2 areas for you to focus on going forward
- What you'll reflect on before the next meeting
- Action items to complete before the next meeting (if appropriate)
- When you will next meet



Making the most of mentorship

How to keep driving the relationship

Revisit your goals and the relationship as you grow

Mentorship isn't static, and neither are you. What you needed at the start may not be what you need three or six months in.

Every few sessions, take a moment to check in with yourself:

- Have my goals shifted or become clearer?
- Is the focus of our conversations still relevant to where I am now?
- Am I getting what I hoped for from this relationship, and if not, what's missing?

If something has changed, say so. The mentees who get the most out of the experience are the ones who treat their goals as a living document, not a fixed destination.



Tip

If something about the dynamic isn't working for you, name it early. A small misalignment addressed in the first few sessions is much easier to course-correct than one that's been left to grow.



Mentee Do's

- **Set the agenda before each session.** Send it in a short note ahead of time. It shows respect for their time and helps you both get straight to what matters.
- **Bring real problems, not polished summaries.** The messier, more honest version of your challenge is almost always more useful to work through than a tidied-up one.
- **Take notes in the moment.** Write down not just what was said, but what it made you think or feel. Those reactions are often where the real insight lives.
- **Act on at least one thing before your next session.** Mentorship compounds when you apply what you discuss. Even a small action keeps the momentum going and gives you something concrete to reflect on together.
- **Say when something isn't landing.** If advice doesn't feel relevant to your situation, say so. A good mentor would rather adjust than have you nod along.



Mentee Don'ts

- **Don't treat your mentor like a decision-maker.** They are a sounding board, not someone who should be telling you what to do. The goal is to help you think more clearly, not to think for you.
- **Don't mistake comfort for progress.** If every session feels easy and affirming, you might not be pushing yourself enough. The most valuable conversations are often the uncomfortable ones.
- **Don't deflect or quietly dismiss feedback that stings a little.** Advice that feels uncomfortable to hear is often the most worth sitting with. You don't have to agree with everything your mentor says, but give it genuine consideration before you decide it doesn't apply to you.
- **Don't let good insights fade before your next session.** Keep a running note of reflections, updates, or new questions as they come up so you arrive prepared and the conversation picks up where it left off.



Mentorly Resources

- [Mentorly Help Center](#)
- [Self-Reflection + Powerful Questions Guide](#)
- [Year-End Discussion Guide](#)
- [Mentorly 100 Career Growth Questions](#)

