

Tips For Mentors – there are some “natural born” mentors, but most experienced lawyers can become effective at mentoring with experience and by considering the following tips:

1. Be available for your advisee and be responsive to his or her needs. Let the advisee control how you can help him or her.
2. Be a good listener. Sometimes, the advisee just wants to vet ideas and is not looking for your advice as to what to do.
3. Ask how you can best help your advisee. Identify his or her goals and develop a plan for meeting those goals.
4. Be clear about what you are willing and able to do for the advisee.
5. Take a personal interest in your advisee. Get to know him or her; this will strengthen your relationship.
6. Be open and transparent about what you get out of the relationship. Why are you acting as a mentor?
7. Be a good role model. Practice what you preach. Remember, the advisee will be watching your conduct in both legal and social settings.
8. Encourage your advisee to come to you with issues and proposed solutions and welcome open discussion. Advisees learn more from the dialogue than from a lecture as to what to do.
9. Remember that mentoring encompasses not just substantive legal issues, but also best practices generally, work-life balance, professionalism, civility, and all other issues that impact one’s professional life.
10. Sponsor your advisee, which includes introducing him or her to bar activities, civic and community organizations, other lawyers, clients and prospective clients, and other networks that you may have.
11. Be patient with your advisee, and don’t be judgmental. Remember that you were once where he or she was.
12. Avoid a mentoring relationship that involves your being solely a lecturer. Dialogue is much more productive. When helpful, tell stories about your practice, how you learned from your mentors, and how you apply these lessons learned to your life. Remember “war stories” that are told for “self-puffing” usually are not very helpful to teach a lesson.
13. Do not treat a formal mentoring relationship as a relationship requiring you to check particular boxes. Be flexible. Think outside the “boxes to check.” Find other topics and activities. Let the advisee suggest things to do.
14. Be a receptive audience. You will learn as much from your advisee as he or she will learn from you.

Tips for Advisees – Advisees can become more effective at getting more out of a mentoring relationship by considering the following tips:

1. Take an active role in the mentoring relationship. Reach out to your mentor and tell him or her your goals for the relationship.
2. Be clear about what you want from your mentor at any given time. Do you want advice right now, a sympathetic ear to listen, or help with problem-solving. Don’t be afraid to ask for civic type work that you want in different situations.

3. When you have an issue to discuss with your mentor, approach him or her not only with the issue but also with what you believe to be an appropriate solution. You will learn more this way.
4. Respect your mentor's time.
5. Be receptive to constructive criticism and new ideas.
6. Take the lead in setting up meetings.
7. Treat interactions with your mentor as dialogues. Your mentor wants to hear what you think.
8. When your mentor invites you to attend a networking event with him or her, jump at the chance. It is an investment.
9. Be a good listener.
10. Observe how your mentor acts in professional settings. You can learn as much from watching what your mentor does as you can from what he or she tells you directly.
11. Ask questions. Your mentor is happy to explain why he or she acted that way in a particular situation.
12. Do not treat a formal mentoring relationship as a relationship requiring you to check particular boxes. If you treat the mentoring relationship as a task or an assignment, it will become nothing more.