

# BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR RESEARCH MENTOR

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# Introduction

## What is a Research Mentor?

- A mentor provides guidance, support, and advice during your research journey.
- They help develop your skills, knowledge, and professionalism?

Note: A Mentor is a guide, not someone who will do the work for you.

# Introduction

## Why is a Research Mentor Important?

- Learn research experience.
- Learn mastery in a specialized area
- Exposure to opportunities (i.e., networking, scholarships)
- Earn a strong recommendation letter
- Get help with graduate school application (i.e., personal statement)
- Understand what it means to become a mentor (future-oriented)

# Key Words

## Successful

- Achieving or resulting in the accomplishment of what is intended or desired.

## Mentor

- A wise ‘adviser’ to someone who is young or inexperienced.

## Relationship

# Mentorship:



Mentors guide students in developing critical research skills, including experimental design, data analysis, literature review, and presentation skills. These skills are not only valuable for research but also transferable to various career paths.



Mentors can provide one-on-one guidance tailored to each student's needs and goals.



Mentors often have established networks in their field, and they can introduce students to other researchers, conferences, and opportunities for collaboration. These connections can be invaluable.

# Why a Strong Mentor-Mentee Relationship Matters

## Benefits for the Mentee

- Access to knowledge and expertise
- Career development opportunities
- Academic support and accountability
- Guidance on research methods, challenges, and resources
- Networking and professional connections

## Benefits for the Mentor

- Satisfaction in fostering growth
- Learning from fresh perspectives
- Expanding their academic network through mentees

# Characteristics of a Good Mentor

## What to look for in a Research Mentor?

- Honesty, availability, and accountability.
- Flexibility, understanding, and openness.
- Focused on developing a partnership with students (agency)
  - Inclusion, collaboration, and a bi-directional relationship.
- High standards/expectations & intellectual challenges (equity, but balance).
- Creates an intellectual ‘brave’ space that promotes academic identity and self-directed learning with guidance.

Hammond, 2015

# Student Perspective: Characteristics of a Good Mentor-Mentee Relationship



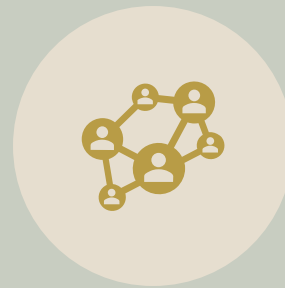
**Mutual Respect:** Acknowledge each other's time, skills, and contributions.



**Open Communication:** Transparent and consistent dialogue about goals, expectations, and feedback.



**Commitment:** Dedication to the relationship and to the research process.



**Trust:** Confidence in each other's abilities and honesty in communication.



A photograph of two women in professional attire sitting at a table and talking. The woman on the right is wearing glasses and has her hands raised as if explaining something. The woman on the left is listening attentively. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with large windows.

# The Relationship

DISCUSS ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS EARLY!

# Topic 1: Roles and Responsibilities

## Define

Define roles early in the relationship.

## Clarify

Clarify mentor's expectations (feedback, meeting frequency, timelines).

## Discuss

Discuss communication preferences (email, in-person, virtual meetings).

## Outline

Outline mentee's responsibilities (independent research, preparation, initiative).

# Topic 2: Goal Setting

## Gather

Discuss research objectives, milestones, and desired outcomes.

## Openness

Clarify research objectives, deadlines, and responsibilities. Be transparent.

## Agree

Agree on how frequently you will meet and communicate.

## Listen

Set expectations for feedback—when and how you will receive it.

The background features several light-colored, 3D-style speech bubbles scattered across the page. The text is centered over these bubbles.

# TOPIC 3: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

# Discuss your learning and feedback preferences.

When you	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic and Tactile
Spell	Do you try to see the word?	Sound out the word, or use a phonetic approach?	Write the word down to find if it feels right?
Talk	Talk sparingly, but dislike listening for too long? Do you favor words such as <i>see</i> , <i>picture</i> , and <i>imagine</i> ?	Enjoy listening, but are impatient to talk? Use words such as <i>hear</i> , <i>tune</i> , and <i>think</i> ?	Gesture and use expressive movements? Use words such as <i>feel</i> , <i>touch</i> , and <i>hold</i> ?
Visualize	Do you see vivid, detailed pictures?	Think in sounds?	Have few images, all involving movement?
Concentrate	Do you become distracted by untidiness or movement?	Become distracted by sounds or noises?	Become distracted by activity around you?
Meet someone again	Do you forget names, but remember faces? Remember where you met?	Forget faces, but remember names? Remember what you talked about?	Remember best what you did together?
Contact people on business	Do prefer direct, face-to-face, personal meetings?	Prefer the telephone?	Talk with them while walking or participating in an activity?
Relax	Do you prefer to watch TV, a play, or movie?	Prefer to listen to the radio, music, or read?	Prefer to play games or work with your hands?
Try to interpret someone's mood	Do you primarily look at facial expressions?	Listen to tone or voice?	Watch body movement?
Read	Do you like descriptive scenes? Pause to imagine the action?	Enjoy dialogue and conversation, or hear the characters talk?	Prefer action stories or are not a keen reader?

# Building the Relationship: Effective Communication

Share	Be clear and transparent about your progress and challenges.
Office Hours	Be proactive in seeking feedback.
Consistency	Set up regular check-ins or meetings.
Respect	Be respectful of your mentor's time and schedule.
Boundaries	Stay professional and respectful in all communications.
Ask! Ask! Ask!	Ask questions!

# What will be Required from YOU?



Willingness to update your cultural lens and understanding.



Embrace constructive criticism for growth.  
Accept and Apply Constructive Criticism.

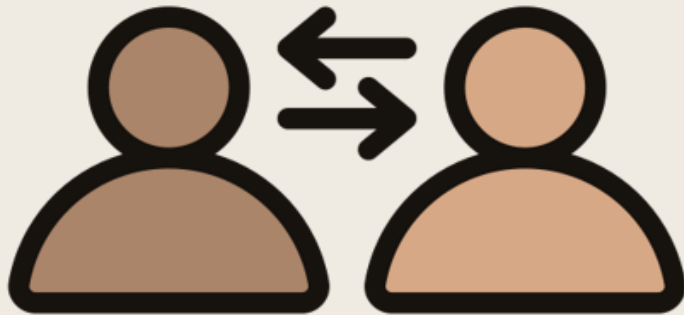


Use feedback to refine skills and ideas.



Ask for clarification when feedback is unclear or when you need more direction.

# Foster Two-Way Communication



**Working Together:** Use a shared document or project management tool to track progress.



**Follow-Up:** Send follow-up emails after meetings to summarize the key points and action items.



**Explore & Manage your Social-Emotional Responses:** How do you handle conflict?



**Be Honest:** If you're struggling with a task, be open about your challenges.



**Feedback Loop:** Let your mentor know how their feedback has impacted your work and progress.



**Build Trust:** Demonstrate reliability, meeting commitments, and be transparent about your workload. **Be Honest:** If you're struggling with a task, be open about your challenges.



A photograph of two women in a professional setting, likely a meeting or classroom. The woman on the right, wearing glasses and a blue blazer, is gesturing with her hands while speaking. The woman on the left is listening attentively. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window.

# Role Play Time!

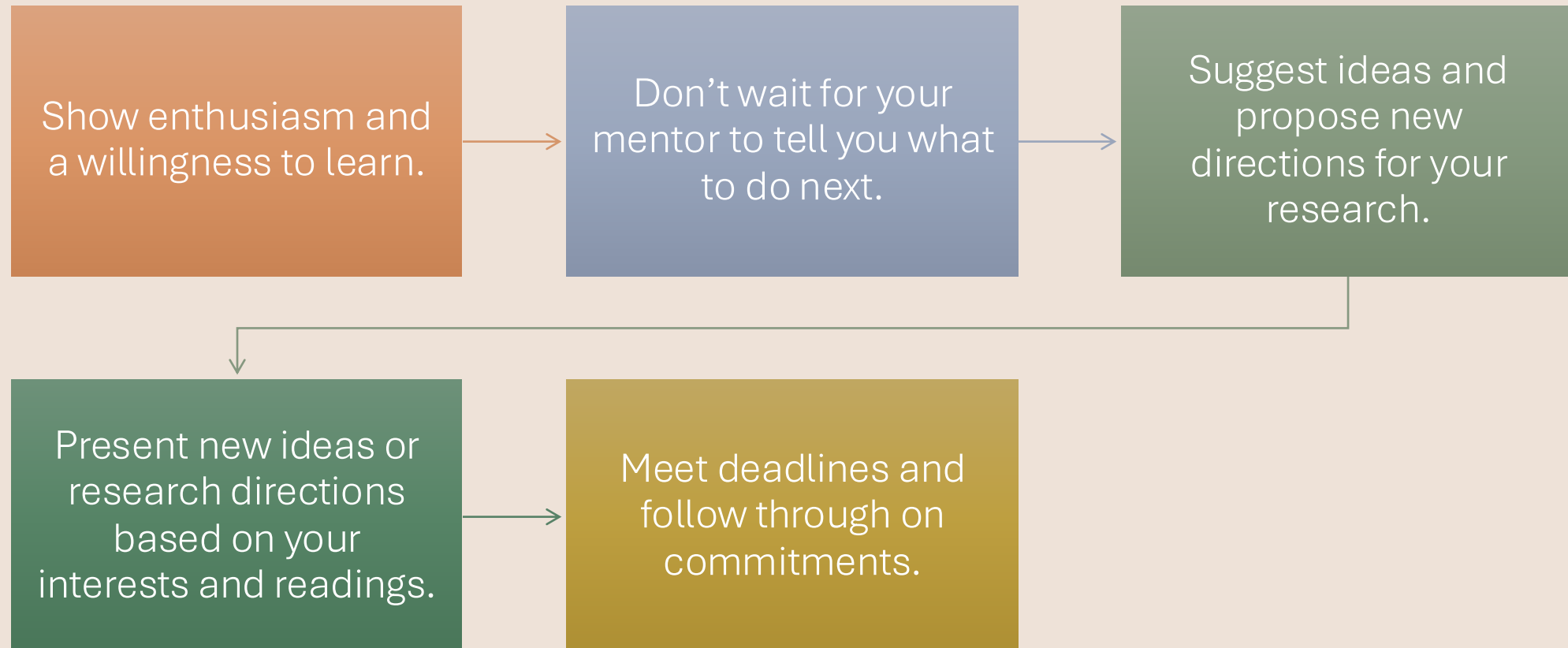
STUDENT- AYSA COLLINS

PROFESSOR- DR. TURNER

**STUDENT TIPS:  
BE PROACTIVE,  
PREPARED, APPRECIATIVE, AND  
ENGAGED**



# Take Initiative



# Be Proactive, Prepared, Appreciative, and Engaged

## Come Prepared:

Always arrive at meetings with an agenda or questions.

Review your mentor's feedback thoroughly and be ready to discuss your progress.



## Show Gratitude

Express appreciation for your mentor's time and support.

Acknowledge their contributions in your presentations, research papers, or projects.

Simple gestures like a thank-you note or public recognition can strengthen the relationship.

# Common Challenges



Mismatched  
expectations



Time management  
difficulties



Conflicts over  
research direction

# Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

1

Address issues directly and diplomatically.

2

Be flexible and open to compromises.

3

Keep communication professional and focused on solutions.

4

Break your research into smaller tasks to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

5

Set regular check-ins with your mentor to stay on track and avoid mismatched expectations.

6

Seek guidance from other faculty or advisors when necessary.

# Navigating Challenges

Unclear Expectations: Address the issue by revisiting your goals and communication strategies

Lack of Regular Feedback: Request more structured feedback sessions or provide specific topics you'd like input on

Scheduling Conflicts: Use a shared calendar or send meeting reminders well in advance to manage time better

# Maximizing the Mentor-Mentee Experience



Be Curious: Ask questions to deepen your understanding.



Take Initiative: Be responsible for your own learning and progress.



Be Prepared: Come to meetings with updates, questions, and new ideas.



Take Responsibility: Use your mentor's guidance, but ultimately, your academic and research success is your responsibility.



# Long-Term Mentor-Mentee Relationship



## Reflect and Adapt

Regularly assess the progress of your mentor relationship.

Adjust communication or expectations as needed to ensure mutual satisfaction.

Reflect on how the mentorship is contributing to your personal and professional growth.



## Transitioning from Mentee to Colleague:

Maintain the relationship after the research project ends.

Seek opportunities for ongoing collaboration.

Your mentor can introduce you to valuable professional networks.

# Long-Term Mentor-Mentee Relationship

## Reciprocation:



Offer help to your mentor in research projects or other initiatives.  
Offer to help with tasks that lighten your mentor's load.  
Support future mentees by passing on lessons learned.

## Benefits:

Potential for co-authorship and collaborative research.  
Opportunities for letters of recommendation.  
Lifelong professional connections.

# Progress Towards Autonomy:

Strive to become more self-reliant in managing your research.

Your mentor's goal is to help you grow into an independent researcher.

# Your Turn! Role Play

- In each pair, one person will ask a question as if you are talking with a professor. The other person will play the role of the professor (be kind 😊).
- Choose one question from the following:
  - How can I become more involved on campus or with your research?
  - How should one select a graduate program?
  - What is your advice for requesting recommendation letters?

# Key Takeaways:

1

**Start early!** Set clear expectations from the start.

2

Build a foundation of trust, respect, and open proactive communication.

3

**Trust the process.** Stay committed to growth and goal alignment.

4

Show initiative, respect, and gratitude.

5

Recognize the long-term value of the mentor-mentee relationship.

*A successful mentor relationship can be transformative which can open doors and opportunities that will last beyond your current research project.*

# Resources and Support



## University Resources

Undergraduate Research Office  
Writing Center or Learning Support  
Research Support Programs



## Additional Support

Peer Networks  
Faculty advisors or department chairs

Thank You

Questions?