

The Mentee's Cheat Sheet

A practical guide for selecting a mentor, running your sessions, and enhancing your career with mentorship.

1. Choosing the right mentor

Look for someone who

- ✓ Is 2 or 3 levels more senior on your track and understands your industry or business context
- ✓ Has experience mentoring people
- ✓ Gives credible, specific, nuanced answers, and not surface-level platitudes
- ✓ Is candid, shares their own failures, and gives honest feedback
- ✓ Is compassionate: makes sessions safe to be honest, remembers your situation, and shows up reliably
- ✓ Connects with you through enough shared values, common ground, or experience to build trust

Be cautious of

- ✗ Your direct manager or anyone who controls your career prospects (you'll censor yourself)
- ✗ Mentors juggling many shallow mentorships; past 2 mentees and they're over-extending themselves
- ✗ Mentors who only speak in terms of their success, frequently cancel, or have a profit or ulterior motive

2. Align in your first session

Before you really engage in a mentorship, agree on these five things with your mentor:

Agree on	What to decide or ask
Objective	"What do I want out of this?" Establish at least one concrete goal (e.g., lead design critiques better, decide on a management track) for the mentorship.
Format	Video, phone, or in person? Whatever works for both of you.
Frequency	About once a month for the first 3–6 months is a good start; you can meet less often as it matures.
Channels	Which channels between sessions (email, Slack, Discord, text), and how often is communication welcome?
Duration	About one hour — long enough to go deep without fatigue.

3. Run every session

The 6 steps

- 1 **Warm up** (~5–10 min): check in and exchange a few personal updates. Don't let this part run too long.
- 2 **Bring one specific thing**: a problem, a decision you're weighing, or work to show related to your objective.
- 3 **Send an agenda a day ahead** so your mentor can come prepared.
- 4 **Take notes** by hand or with a note-taking app, with permission.
- 5 **Leave with one action** to try before the next session, such as a deliverable, self-reflection, or doing some reading all count.
- 6 **Report back** at the start of the next session, as this motivates your mentor's continued investment in your growth.

4. Good questions to ask your mentor

Ask your mentor

"Have you experienced this situation? What did you do?"

"Looking back, what would you do differently?"

"What mattered more than you expected in reaching your level?"

"Where do you see me over- or under-investing my effort?"

"What's a mistake you made that I could avoid?"

"Who else should I learn from? Would you be open to introducing me?"

5. Knowing when to wrap up

Mentorships are meant to end, and that's normal. When you've met your objective — or your needs or your mentor's availability change — close with genuine thanks and a short recap of what changed for you.



A mentorship succeeds when you think and act differently in your career for the better. Forming a lasting friendship with the mentor could happen, but it's OK if it doesn't.