Your first mentoring meeting

A shared starting point for a useful working relationship.

01. Bring a focused starting question

A mentoring conversation is easier to use when it has a focus. Prepare a short introduction, a description of your current situation and one question you would like to explore. You do not need to share sensitive information to explain a professional goal.

02. Agree what mentoring can offer

Discuss the mentor's relevant experience and the participant's expectations. A mentor can listen, challenge assumptions and share perspective. They should not promise employment, make decisions for the participant or offer advice outside their competence.

03. Set practical boundaries

Agree how often to meet, how long a meeting will last and how to communicate between sessions. Discuss confidentiality and its limits, cancellation expectations and how either person can raise a concern or end the relationship respectfully.

Put your thinking into practice.

04. Make a simple meeting agenda

Begin with a brief update. Choose one topic. Explore options before selecting an action. Leave time at the end to summarise what was useful and agree a next step. A focused 30-minute conversation can be more useful than an unstructured hour.

05. Leave with an action you own

The participant should choose the action. Make it specific, achievable and connected to the goal. Agree when to review it. The mentor can ask what support would help, but responsibility for the decision stays with the participant.

06. Review the working relationship

After a few meetings, ask whether the focus and format are useful. What should continue? What should change? It is reasonable to adjust goals or conclude a mentoring relationship when its purpose has been served.

First-meeting checklist

Prepare a goal and one question. Agree boundaries. Set the next meeting. Record one action. Keep notes brief and store them responsibly. Do not record or share someone else's personal information without an appropriate agreement.

My next action

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