EA Oxford - Guide to Successful 1-1s

Huw Thomas (info.eaoxford@gmail.com), 12/10/2018

Table of contents:

[Table of contents:](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Intro 1-1s](#)

- [Primary aim:](#)
- [Secondary aims:](#)
- [Good questions to keep conversation flowing/vaguely EA related:](#)

[Mentor 1-1s](#)

- [Primary aims:](#)
- [Secondary aims:](#)
- [Useful questions:](#)
- [Useful tips:](#)
- [When discussing cause prioritisation](#)

[Offering to give people books / handbooks](#)

[Email Formats & Scheduling 1-1s](#)

- [Scheduling](#)
- [Intro 1-1s](#)
- [Mentor 1-1s](#)

[Common Resources to Send People After a 1-1](#)

Introduction

A one-on-one (1-1) is a conversation between two people, usually in the context of a shared aim, interest or business. Over the past years, 1-1s have become a staple activity of many EA local groups. The main aims of a 1-1 are as follows:

- **Information:** In-person conversations are a high fidelity way of communicating about Effective Altruism ideas. Speaking in-person and with feedback allows you to communicate with nuance, and to address individual concerns that are raised.
- **Motivation:** 1-1s can help increase the other person's excitement and motivation about doing good effectively (e.g. by setting an inspiring example, by helping to deal with feelings of guilt).
- **Community:** 1-1s help to integrate the person in the local EA community and broader EA network. Anecdotally, people are far more likely to attend community events if they have personal bonds with other community members, and a 1-1 provides an excellent entry point. Knowing a lot of the people within your community personally also means you're better able to make connections between individuals.
- **Signposting:** Getting to know someone on an individual level means that you can tailor the resources that you recommend to them.
- **Support:** Getting information in a 1-1 allows for specific, targeted support of the other person through the local EA community - connecting them to relevant people, inviting them to relevant events and so on.
- **Recruiting:** Knowing people in your community on a personal level facilitates finding good candidates for community projects or committee roles.
- **Skill-Building:** Running 1-1s teaches you to communicate complicated ideas clearly, and helps to improve your social skills.

Intro 1-1s

This is the first 1-1 that someone will have within the EA Oxford community.

Primary aim:

- **Offer a friendly, welcoming face:** Chat about what comes up naturally mostly, don't 'attack' the other person's views, don't try to 'win' arguments, and be especially considerate and nice. Keep in mind that in an intro 1-1 you will be the main point of contact with the EA community for the other person, and you will be perceived as representative of EA as a whole.

Secondary aims:

- **Help them figure out the most relevant EA Oxford events for them**: Generally, a career workshop. You can also mention Kieran/Promit's intro workshop, or if they're super keen/have already engaged with EA, encourage them to go straight to a Concepts workshop. Also mention socials/discussion groups/speaker events, but highlight the workshops.
    - If they're interested in attending an intro careers workshop, send them a sign-up link to the next workshop (if there are free places), otherwise send them this form

to indicate their interest in a future careers workshop: https://goo.gl/forms/JU9cShbjsvsAdyyY2
    - If they're interested in attending a concepts workshop, send them a sign-up link to the next workshop (if there are free places), otherwise send them this form to indicate their interest in a future careers workshop: https://goo.gl/forms/BUA29nAq8nBPxAdQ2
- **Help them figure out the most relevant EA content for them**: After each 1-1, you should follow up with some content. CEA resources and 80k are the best places to look for relevant stuff - you can also post on the Slack to ask if you need advice on what resources to send. You might also hand out some books/handbooks (forthcoming) during the 1-1. Remember that as well as furthering their interests, this is in part about challenging them - if they indicate interest in a cause area, you might want to send both a relevant piece on this area and a piece on a different, potentially higher impact area, and explain in the message that we like to encourage people to explore and challenge their beliefs. If you give out the 80k book or DGB, qualify with some more updated resources
    - Future generations article from 80k
    - Toby Ord episode of the 80k podcast (this is a phenomenal resource and I highly encourage you to share it with people you think will listen to the whole thing)
    - MacAskill TED Talk
    - Why we prioritise the long-run future - really quick article running through main considerations
- **Correct any misconceptions they have about EA, and talk through any objections they bring up:** It's probably worth 30-60 minutes of reading through the above two links and trying to rephrase in your own words anything that you wouldn't already feel confident discussing with someone.

Good questions to keep conversation flowing/vaguely EA related:

- What degree are you doing?
- How did you find out about EA?
- (If they were rented a book - find this out through HubSpot): How did you find the book?
- Have you been to any of our events before? (Naturally leads to exposition about events)
- Is there anything about EA that you've learnt about so far that particularly interests you? (Good way of getting into a chat about resources so you can recommend relevant stuff)
- (If they seem really interested): Have you thought much about which causes are the most pressing to work on? (Idea is that a brief discussion about cause prio at this point gives you a chance to emphasise the importance of cause prioritisation - this section of 80k and the articles it links to go into the detail about why cause prioritisation could decide 99% of one's impact)

I recommend over-preparing (eg running through the above) beforehand and spending a little time thinking about how each 1-1 could have been improved afterwards for your first ~5 of these

- doing these is a skill, and being overly purposeful about it the first few times will speed up the learning process.

Mentor 1-1s

These 1-1s are for anyone who has had an intro 1-1, but should be spending more time learning about EA and cause prio before doing any rigorous career planning, that is - (roughly) has not yet attended a Concepts workshop.

Primary aims:

- **Figure out how much they've engaged with EA so far, and help speed up and improve their engagement with EA resources (cause prioritisation in particular).**
- **Encourage them to attend events in Oxford for development & engaging with community.**

Secondary aims:

- **Be friendly and welcoming**

Useful questions:

- How can I / EA Oxford help you have more impact?
- Is there anything that you're stuck on that I can help you with?
- Have you been to any of our events before?
- Is there anything related to EA that you've learnt about so far that particularly interests you?
- Which problems do you think are most urgent for humanity to solve at the moment? Why?
- Do you have any suggestions for what steps we could take to improve the EA Oxford community? Which kinds of events would you find most valuable?

Useful tips:

- Aim to be a signpost - don't teach. Try and understand what level of knowledge they are at, and get a feel for the things they don't know yet. Then, instead of trying to lecture them about topic XYZ, get them interested in the question and then find the best articles for X, Y and Z and send it to them after the meeting. Brief conversations about relevant topics are good and encouraged, just be careful about the dynamic and make sure to clarify when you're uncertain about what you're talking about.
- Get a feeling of how sophisticated their cause prioritisation models are by asking "what do you think the most pressing global problem to solve is?". This makes people actually engage their models, rather than the question "have you thought about cause

prioritisation" to which people can just answer "yes" without actually trying to use their models. This recommendation generalises: ask open ended questions to get them talking, rather than yes/no questions.

- You can view your 1-1 as a way of reducing friction for other people on their path to becoming more engaged EAs. E.g. Sometimes people are stuck on not engaging on arguments for long-termism; you are the grease that reduces that friction by sending them articles on long-termism and talking about it in a conversation. Sometimes people are stuck on not thinking cause prioritisation is very important - you are the grease that reduces that friction by pointing out some reasons that it could be very important, and sending out some relevant reading afterwards.
- Your mileage may vary on this, but in order to frame the coffee in a way that lets you ask slightly weirder questions, it can help to just ask something like "I think there's some good evidence that cause prioritisation is the most important thing to think about in order to have an impact, but for some people this is quite personal - are you keen to chat about it?"
- If you get the sense near the middle or end of the 1-1 that the person has done a sufficient amount of thinking about cause prioritisation, then you might want to ask them "What are you planning to do after you graduate?" - the idea is that if they've thought a fair bit about cause prio, a chat about career options might be more useful.

When discussing cause prioritisation

The key is to identify which ideas they haven't heard yet, and which arguments for these ideas they have and haven't engaged with yet. Of course, doing this well is reasonably dependent on your having engaged with these resources yourself a lot too. At the bottom of the page are listed some of the most important articles to have a good understanding of and to direct people to - inviting someone to a Concepts workshop is also a pretty robustly good thing to do for this. Insofar as you decide to speak about someone's career in these 1-1s, you might also want to check out this reading list.

Offering to give people books / handbooks

We believe a significant part of the value from all EA Oxford events comes from encouraging people to engage with high-fidelity EA resources (in particular books!) in their own time. Offering a person a book (in a non-weird way that doesn't create associations with religious cults!) on an important EA topic you spoke about during the 1-1 could determine most of the impact of your 1-1.

We usually frame this as offering people to ‘borrow a book from EA Oxford’. This provides us with a nice opportunity to follow up with them after a couple of months and save some money on books. However, we ultimately don’t care a lot about getting the books back - we have the funding to provide these books and the expected value per book recipient clearly seems to outweigh the cost of the book.

We tend to offer people one of the following books (depending on circumstances):

- Doing Good Better
- 80,000 Hours Career Guide
- Superintelligence
- Animal Liberation
- Thinking, Fast and Slow *(to help more experienced EAs skill up)*
- Superforecasting *(to help more experienced EAs skill up)*

Feel free to order any of these books (e.g. from Amazon) using your EA Oxford Monzo card. You can either order books to your own address to hand out in future, or you order them directly to your 1-1 person (after they agreed to want the book).

Email Formats & Scheduling 1-1s

Scheduling

In the past, we have reached out to people potentially interested in 1-1s via either Facebook or Email. Both options are fine and your choice will mostly depend on what is most convenient (e.g. what contact information do you have of the person). Emails signal formality a little better, so e.g. if you’re worried about coming across as asking for a date, they are a good recourse.

Aim to schedule 1-1s efficiently (e.g. in offering 1-1s, clearly suggest potential precise times and locations to reduce back-and-forth messaging), this will both save you and the other person valuable time. In case you’re running many 1-1s or find scheduling very stressful, consider signing up for and using Calendly (https://calendly.com/), an online service that lets other people book meetings with you (downside of Calendly is that some people may find this weird).

Intro 1-1s

Hey X,

How's it going? I'm Y and I'm part of the Effective Altruism Oxford committee - just a quick email to ask if you'd like to grab coffee [or go for a walk] sometime soon, to chat about Effective Altruism, the EA Oxford community, which global problem is most pressing to work on, or anything else!

[Say which times you're available - maybe link your FB profile if you would prefer to organise that way]

Mentor 1-1s

Hey X,

How's it going? I'm Y and I'm part of the Effective Altruism Oxford committee - just a quick email to ask if you'd like to grab coffee [or go for a walk] sometime soon, to chat about EA, cause prioritisation, career goals or anything else!

[Say which times you're available - maybe link your FB profile if you would prefer to organise that way. You might want to change this up somewhat if you already know the person]

Common Resources to Send People After a 1-1

- **EA Introduction:**
  - Introduction to Effective Altruism: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/introduction-to-effective-altruism/
  - William MacAskill's TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/will_macaskill_how_can_we_do_the_most_good_for_the_world
  - Prospecting for Gold, Owen Cotton-Barratt: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/prospecting-for-gold-owen-cotton-barratt
  - CEA's List of Effective Altruism Resources: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/resources/

- **Advanced EA Principles:**
  - Crucial Considerations & Wise Philanthropy: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/crucial-considerations-and-wise-philanthropy-nick-bostrom/
  - The Moral Value of Information: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/the-moral-value-of-information-amanda-askell/
  - Epistemic Modesty: http://effective-altruism.com/ea/1g7/in_defence_of_epistemic_modesty/

- **Career Choice:**
  - 80,000 Hours career guide: https://80000hours.org/career-guide/

    - 80,000 Hours Podcast: https://80000hours.org/podcast/ (consider recommending and sending your 1-1 people individual podcast episodes on relevant topics - Toby Ord's podcast on the long-term future is a phenomenal resource here)

- **Cause Areas:**
    - **Global health & international development:**
        - CEA's cause profile on global health: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/cause-profile-global-health-and-development/
        - The book 'Poor Economics': https://smile.amazon.co.uk/Poor-Economics-Barefoot-Hedge-fund-Surprising/dp/0718193660/
    - **Animal welfare:**
        - CEA's cause profile on animal welfare: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/cause-profile-animal-welfare/
        - Arguments against speciesism: http://www.animal-ethics.org/ethics-animals-section/speciesism/
        - Why effective donations are more important for animals than dietary choices: https://sentience-politics.org/effective-donation
        - How much suffering is caused by different animal foods (the case for reducing eggs, over reducing milk): https://reducing-suffering.org/how-much-direct-suffering-is-caused-by-various-animal-foods/
        - Wild Animal Suffering:
            - This fantastic 60-minute introductory talk: https://youtu.be/4aa6g1y4l8I
            - The importance of wild animal suffering: https://foundational-research.org/the-importance-of-wild-animal-suffering/
    - **Existential risks & long-run future:**
        - CEA's Long-run Future cause profile: https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/cause-profile-long-run-future/
        - 80,000 Hours' article on the 'Long-term value thesis': https://80000hours.org/articles/future-generations/
        - Nick Beckstead's 'A Proposed Adjustment to the Astronomical Waste Argument' https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/a-proposed-adjustment-to-the-astronomical-waste-argument-nick-beckstead/
        - 80,000 Hours' article on existential risks: https://80000hours.org/articles/extinction-risk/
        - 80,000 Hours' problem profile on AI safety: https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/positively-shaping-artificial-intelligence/

        - 80,000 Hours' problem profile on risks from biotechnology: https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/biosecurity/
        - Foundational Research Institute's "Reducing risks of astronomical suffering" https://foundational-research.org/reducing-risks-of-astronomical-suffering-a-neglected-priority/
    - **Meta:**
        - 80,000 Hours' problem profile on 'Promoting Effective Altruism': https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/promoting-effective-altruism/
        - REG's article on Meta-Charities: https://reg-charity.org/meta-charities/