

Mentors Guide

LIMIT BREAK *Mentorship*

Mentors Guide

Thank you for being part of Limit Break. This guide is to help you with how to be an effective mentor and to make the most out of the program with your mentee. If you have any problems, you can contact us at hello@limitbreak.co.uk or DM any of the committee members on our Discord!

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If you are looking for the mentee's guide, that can be found here:

[Mentees Guide](#)

Good Luck!

We hope you have a beautiful mentorship, and that you may prosper in the year ahead of you!



Download the **Cheat Sheet** here: [Freebies](#)

Limit Break Basics

The Four Pillars

Informality

Mentor-mentee pairs to meet once a month for 6 months, totaling 6 virtual or in person meetings, at the convenience of the mentor.

Rapport

Matching with a person based on their interests and areas of expertise.

Quality Conversations

Mentees are charged with developing thoughtful agendas for their meetings and sharing them with their mentors in advance.

Measured Effectiveness

Roundtables and surveys to poll not only what mentees learned, but how they were applying it in their everyday work.

Got Chemistry?

As a mentor, ask yourself these four main questions both when meeting a potential mentee and soon after you have embarked as a mentor to see if you're a good fit:

- **Can I clearly be helpful to this mentee?** Have they reached out with clear reasons or intentions for why they'd like my help? Are there specific needs they have that I can address?
- **Can this person be completely open and honest?** Are they willing to provide deep context about their problems and vulnerabilities? Will they be able to share data, metrics, goals, slide decks, etc. that will help in the process?
- **Is this person prepared?** Do they tend to be proactive about setting up time and providing enough context or an agenda upfront? Do they direct conversations and ask specific questions? (Be wary of people who want more general help or to touch base without a topic in mind.)
- **Does this person give me energy?** Do I usually learn things from this person myself? Does talking to them allow me to reflect differently on my own business or path? Has talking to them in the past felt like a good use of time? Do they inspire me to think more deeply, even though they have less experience?

Not every mentorship relationship is going to be successful, and that's okay! There are many reasons why things might not work out; timing could be wrong, the experience gap too wide, etc. If things aren't progressing well, let the Limit Break team know and we'll see if there is a way to rectify the situation either through additional communication, or assigning another mentee should any still be available and a good potential match.

Mentorship Ground Rules

These were taken from [this article](#), and we've distilled it to the important bits for you in this document.

[Don't treat it like a transaction](#)

[Don't boil the ocean in every meeting](#)

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Don't treat it like a transaction

The best way to prevent this is to use your first meeting to deepen your personal connection. Don't start with business. Take the time to understand each other's career paths, goals, hopes, fears, and lifestyle. All of this will factor into how the work itself can be approached optimally, and will highlight issues that might need to be worked through.

Ask what the person's life is like outside of work. How do they spend their time when they're not working? Where does work intersect with life? Where does it cause worry or stress or inspire enthusiasm? That's a better entry point into talking about work, and it leaves both people feeling more bought into further conversations.

There are a lot of areas where knowing someone personally will help them navigate things better. If a mentee is struggling with relationships with executives, hiring decisions, gaps in their skill set, motivating their team — having a more developed sense of who they are as a person will help elicit the best advice for handling it. Personality, introversion, extroversion, how they manage time, and what they enjoy doing will all make a difference. With this information, a mentor can better inhabit their mentee's shoes.

This also sets a more conversational cadence for all future interactions. Plant the seed of trust right away with a more personal conversation. It encourages both people to share their challenges — historical and current. It makes everyone human, emphasises what is

shared in common and is more bi-directional. It also breaks down what might be an intimidating power dynamic, and makes you feel more comfortable as peers.

Don't boil the ocean in every meeting

One of the hazards of mentorship meetings is that there can be far too much to discuss. Very few professionals only have one major challenge on their plate. It can be tempting to unpack everything that's going on lately. This will only limit how deep your conversation can go on the issues that matter most. Be really intentional about picking the 2-3 questions you really want to solve in the space of an hour.

Try not to veer into big, conceptual thinking or conversation. If you take on something huge, it's easy for your time to run out without actually tackling the practical stuff that's coming up next week or month. Try to keep things really tied to the decisions that need to get made, or the solutions that need to be found.

One preventative measure to try: If a meeting agenda is too jam-packed, or if things start with the mentee listing too many concerns, call a timeout and rewrite that agenda. Mentor and mentee should take five minutes to co-create a more realistic and focused punch list. Don't try to do too much, be ruthless in paring topics down.

Check your mentee's blind spots

Experience gives mentors a different vantage point to see a lot of what a mentee may not. Ideally, you have been in their shoes earlier in your career. You've seen how things play out and can recognise patterns more readily.

Mentors who are good at sharing their wisdom from experience, rather than just being instructional about what to do next, can help their mentee validate whether their assumptions or actions are correct. They can help leapfrog obstacles that won't matter down the road. They can tell mentees how the story is likely to end with certain issues they present to save them time going down roads themselves. A good meeting progression can be as so:

- Mentee explains a challenge they're facing.
- Mentor explains how they've tackled a similar challenge.
- Mentee explains how conditions might be different based on their business or situation.
- Mentor suggests what to replicate from their experience based on their mentee's specific context.

It's also recommended for mentors to ask questions like, "Why is that important?" instead of straight up saying something is or isn't. Or "How do you feel in meetings like that?" This gives mentees the prompt they need to develop their own insights.

Consider as well whether there are gentle ways to prompt your mentees to share their own solutions to problems rather than providing any direct suggestions for them - many mentees may have excellent solutions already, but could lack confidence in sharing. Mentors that can utilise other techniques such as coaching through issues can help the

mentee learn more skills and build confidence with critical thinking and finding solutions with your guidance.

Look for themes and organising principles

Mentees may not have a clear list of needs and issues to discuss - they may need assistance in pinpointing exactly what those needs are at the start. Spending time discussing their challenges and what they hope to achieve in their career can give you both a clearer picture of where value can be added through this program. We have provided a resource for mentees as an option to get started with this as a [self assessment exercise](#).

Some of the greatest value a mentor can provide is identifying themes in what their mentee shares and providing broader, organising principles from their experience that can solve many problems at once.

Sometimes mentees ask about X but they really want Y — a new way to think about their work. This is an area where mentors can provide unique value. Consider looking across agendas for your meetings, and any notes you take. What situations continue to emerge? Can they be batched into themes? Is there a type of problem that's giving a mentee more trouble than others? Is it possible to take on all at once?

Be honest and transparent

This is critically important on both sides. If either person feels like they can't share key information, the relationship won't work. Everyone has to be comfortable being vulnerable, admitting that they don't know (especially on the mentor side). Mentors have to be able to say, "Yeah I went through that and I failed spectacularly for these reasons". Mentees need to be okay bringing as much actual data with them as possible — pipelines, work flows, metrics they're trying to hit, roadmaps. This is what will make mentors effective at tackling real situations. Great trust and respect need to be established immediately.

When a mentee is tight-lipped, it can be frustrating for a mentor to read between the lines and give advice based on incomplete information. To alleviate this, mentors should aim to be very transparent themselves upfront, sharing something that highlights their vulnerability or that they are willing to share something fairly sensitive. You have to be willing to lean in on some personal disclosure. Right away share something that went really wrong or that you still regret.

Remember, nothing engenders trust faster than giving someone your undivided attention. Both mentors and mentees want to feel 100% listened to, like their counterpart is present, and that their time is being wisely spent and valued. Set a loud timer on your phone so you don't need to have it on the table, and time won't be a distraction. Remain engaged and committed to bringing your full intellectual horsepower to each meeting, and the trust will follow.

No homework — focus on execution

While giving homework could create accountability, they acknowledge that everyone's too busy for extra work, and mentees might start dreading going to meetings. Instead, you want to gauge progress by checking in regularly on what a mentee has accomplished between meetings. The goal is really just making sure that your mentee is executing. You can calibrate how seriously a mentee is taking things by what they say they delivered between meeting 1 and 2.

At the end of each meeting, mentors should say explicitly: "Okay, you should try to get to 'X point' by the time we talk next" — be clear about what that point is and what getting to that milestone means exactly. Then at the beginning of the next meeting, immediately check in: "Where did you net out on reaching X goal we set out two weeks ago?" If not much progress was made, spend time diagnosing why. For mentorship to make a difference, a mentee needs to commit to executing what they say they will. If you find that your mentee is consistently not delivering what they promised without clear reasons why then it's perhaps worth evaluating what the sessions could still be potentially useful for or if it's worth everyone's time to continue.

To set up what can reasonably be done by the next meeting, we recommend that mentees choose their most pressing challenge and say: "I'm going to tackle this problem. Here's what I'm thinking I'll do and why. How does that sound to you?" That way, mentors can help enforce realistic scope. Mentees shouldn't directly ask mentors what they would do. Replication doesn't reinforce learning. Mentees creating agendas should build in time at the start of each meeting to review what was done and how it worked out. For example, maybe they said they'd apply two tactics. What was the outcome? This is where mentors shine — unpacking why things went the way they did.

Mentors are learning too

Keeping both parties energised about the relationship depends on mutual learning. It's important for mentors to be proactive about asking questions when they see the opportunity to learn from their mentees — and about connecting the dots after their sessions to see what they might glean that's relevant to their own work. Mentees can do their part by asking mentors what they want to learn or know more about to see what they can contribute. Here are a few of the things mentors said they learned during their sessions:

- How to better explain concepts and tactics. You're not a master at something until you can teach it, that's harder than you think.
- Becoming a better manager by spotting gaps in communication or wrong assumptions.
- Visibility into a different kind of business model than they're used to. In this case, the mentee was working with a subscription model, forcing their mentor to think through how they'd adapt their approach in that situation.
- Industry trends and intelligence. When you both work in the same industry, the exchange of what and who you each know is pretty valuable.
- How to do a task better based on how a mentee was doing it.

- How to think more deeply about relationships with their own bosses and reports, based on how mentees hear directions from managers like themselves.
- Where their gut impulses come from. One mentor has intuition about what to do, but having a mentee forces him to unpack and explain why they think it's the right decision.

Lastly, at the end of a mentoring engagement — or when you reach a milestone like three months — have a check-in where the mentee shares how much of their mentor's advice they took, how it was applied, where it's helped and where it hasn't. It's a mini post-mortem that yields insight that will help both people get more out of mentorship going forward.

Additional Support

It's important to have a number of perspectives to consider on the biggest challenges your mentees face. As a mentor, don't hesitate to open doors for your most prepared and promising mentees. They'll always remember you for it, and it'll reduce their dependency on your point of view. The Limit Break Slack channel was created to encourage group discussions and getting different points of views from people of different backgrounds.

The Worksheet

Worksheet is based from [Working Lunch](#).

Both you and your mentee can use the optional Limit Break worksheet that you can use during your meetings to take note of your goals and next steps.



Document

Google Doc

(Make a copy)

[Limit Break Worksheet - Google Docs](#)

Pdf

[Limit Break Worksheet.pdf](#)

Spreadsheet

Google Sheets

(Make a copy)

[Limit Break Worksheet - Google Sheets](#)

Excel

[Limit Break Worksheet.xlsx](#)

Setting goals

Get an idea of what the mentee wants to achieve. These can be short or long term goals.

Deadlines

Set a reasonable timeframe and stick to it. This can change, but holding your mentee accountable for making progress matters, and a deadline can give clarity and motivation.

The why's and how's

Figure out what these goals can achieve for your mentee. What are the long term and short term gains? Think about professional development and upskilling but don't forget about soft skills like confidence, reputation and visibility. Find practical steps towards these goals. Think about connections and networks you need to expand to get there. Make a list of tools and opportunities to achieve these goals, and see what your mentee already has and what they need help getting.

Contingencies

Not achieving a goal isn't the end of everything. Figure out the next move if things don't go as planned. If the deadline passes, simply reassess the goal and the means and continue forward.

Mentor FAQ

Coaching vs Jumping to Answers

Some issues your mentee might present to you to discuss might be something that you can solve with a straightforward answer or potentially can describe a similar experience you had. This of course depends on the issue, but it can be a great way to resolve the issue with a quick solution.



However, this isn't necessarily always the best approach for issues that might be more centred around soft skills or interpersonal issues they may be facing in their role can benefit from different approaches especially someone looking to strengthen their leadership skills. Jumping straight in with what you perceive to be the answer might be helpful but isn't always the best choice.

We must also be cognizant of our potential differences of role, knowledge, experiences, assumptions, privilege and biases we might be applying to the situation and we also might not have the full picture before jumping in with a solution. The correct answer for you might not always be the best choice for the mentee.

A useful skill when presented with these issues is to consider if it can be coached rather than told. **Coaching focuses on the mentor guiding the mentee to the answer themselves without explicitly stating the answer right at the start, but instead uses the opportunity for the mentee to develop their problem solving skills.** It focuses on the mentee defining the issue (which in turn gives you a greater understanding), defining the core issue and potential solutions and defines what specific help the mentor can give if any.

If there are no clear outcomes established by coaching them through solving the issue then it would be good to step in with your perception of the correct action to take, but it's a useful skill to add to your mentoring techniques. It can also be useful practice for your mentee in critical thinking and finding solutions. Coaching doesn't mean it needs to take a huge amount of time, but can be used from time to time if relevant to the situation.



You can find more information about coaching processes and questions [here](#) or watch the TED talk 'How to tame your Advice Monster' by Michael Bungay Stanier [here](#).