



UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA

# Virtual Mentoring Tips

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## Virtual Mentoring Tips

Mentoring has traditionally taken place face-to-face, but Virtual Mentoring can be a great alternative. However, meeting virtually requires new to maximize it's effectiveness. Here are 10 tips on how to ensure that your mentor/mentee meetings are effective and impactful even though there is a screen between you!

### 1. Preparation

The good mentoring meeting starts *before* the actual meeting, and just like physical meetings, preparation is the key when it comes to conducting good and effective mentoring conversations.

No later than a few days before the meeting, mentee should send the agenda to mentor. In this way the mentor can prepare for the topics that the mentee wants to work with, make some thoughts about the meeting and maybe take some notes on which questions or topics that the mentor thinks is important for the mentee's learning. Therefore, both the mentor and the mentee always have some preparation to do before the meetings, but the mentee's effort will often require more time.

### 2. Make sure your connection works well

Agree on which platform to use. There are a lot of free platforms available on the market, but we always recommend making a profile which is protected by a password. Use a laptop/computer rather than a tablet or smart phone which may result in less functionality available.

Before the meeting, it is a good idea to test and make sure that your connection, sound and camera works. Make sure that your camera captures your picture approximately in the middle of the screen and is on level with your face. Ensure that you have appropriate lighting.

It is also important to find an optimal place for the meeting – preferably in an enclosed space where there is as little ambient noise as possible. At the same time, it is important that you sit somewhere where you can talk privately about confidential and sensitive topics.

### 3. Clarify roles and responsibility

In a mentorship, mentee is responsible to learn, and mentor is responsible for the process and for creating a good framework for learning and development. It is up to the mentor and mentee to discuss the expectations they have for each other. When the mentoring conversation takes places virtually, it is important to figure out who calls who, for example, when the meeting starts or if the connection is lost during the meeting.

### 4. Be punctual

Make sure to be ready on time and end the meeting at the agreed time. Mentally prepare yourself 15 minutes before the meeting starts. Open the meeting platform you have agreed on 5 minutes before to check that the technology works. Check your camera and microphone. If you are late to a meeting, make sure you give notice as soon as possible.

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### 5. Visual effects

Virtual meetings are more intense than physical meetings. It is therefore important to vary the meeting, for example by including visual means. Consider using a virtual whiteboard for drawing or taking notes around a specific topic. Present the homework through screen sharing (Word, PowerPoint, Excel etc.).

### 6. Mind your body language

To communicate effectively in a virtual meeting, body language matters. Many details which normally play an important role in physical meetings may be lost during virtual meetings. One of the most important but also hardest things to show in a virtual meeting is presence.

During a virtual meeting you can show that you are presence **by looking into the camera**. This way the other party feels that you are looking into their eyes, which is an important element in a conversation. Virtual meetings require us to actively use the part of our body that can be seen – our head and hands. Examples can be a smile, head nodding or a thumbs-up.

Sometimes virtual meetings without the use of video can make you listen more focused. It is therefore important to find a good balance between the use of camera, visual aids and sound.

### 7. Silence is good

In virtual mentoring meetings, it can be difficult to deal with the silence that naturally arises in conversations. The silence may seem strange and awkward, but in the silence something good is hidden, creating space for reflection and contemplation.

### 8. Give room for immersion

In continuation of the silence that naturally arises during a mentor meeting, it is important to actively provide space for reflection. Say out aloud that you need a moment rest and take a 5-minute break for example to grab a new cup of coffee or breathe some air.

It can also be a good idea to provide time for the mentor and mentee to write down notes during the meeting. It can be difficult to concentrate on listening as you write. Make it a good habit to keep small reflection breaks during the conversation.

### 9. Consider recording the conversation

Recording the conversation can be valuable for both mentor and mentee to listen through, in connection with one's self-evaluation after the meeting, and an effective way to capture the content and learning of the meeting. **It is important both parties are ok with the recording**, make a clear guideline for how to store and subsequently delete the recordings.

### 10. Evaluate the mentoring meeting

Follow-up and evaluations are an integrated part of a successful mentoring process. Just as breaks during the mentoring meeting, it is important to make room for reflection. It is important to end the mentoring meeting with an

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evaluation of the conversation, progress and results. Remember to schedule a new meeting before the meeting ends.

As a follow-up on the mentoring meeting and evaluation, it may be a good idea to send a follow-up email briefly summarizing the main aspects of the mentoring meeting, as well as what mentee should work on before the next meeting.