

# AAO Mentee Handbook



American  
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Orthodontists®

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## MENTEE ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

Mentoring is a fundamental human relationship in which one person invests time, energy and expertise to nurture the growth of another person. Mentors are the special people in our lives who help us reach our potential. Mentors may range widely in style—from that of a persistent encourager who boosts our self-confidence to that of a stern taskmaster who teaches us to appreciate excellence in performance—but mentors all share the same sincere care for their mentees.

Mentoring is often spoken about in corporate circles, but mentoring can have an impact much deeper than improved work performance. When a mentor accepts and applies the mentor's wisdom in diverse ways, it can lead to all-encompassing personal growth. During the process, the two work together to discover and develop the mentee's latent abilities and encourage acquisition of knowledge and skills as opportunities arise. The mentor serves as a tutor, counselor, and friend, enabling us to sharpen skills and increase knowledge.

An important note: To gain from mentoring, you have to reach out, grasp, and learn from the mentor's offered wisdom. *You can only experience the benefits of mentoring by assuming ownership of what the mentor has offered and using it appropriately.*

The following guidelines will help you get the most out of your mentoring relationship.

### **Mentees should:**

- Be an AAO member (required)
- Be willing to participate in the program for at least 1 year
- Be committed to their own personal and professional development
- Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge
- Be proactive in discussing development plans with mentors
- Understand the mentors' role is to guide and support
- Create and define goals of the mentoring relationship
- Maintain confidentiality and trust of the mentoring relationship
- Be open and honest about their goals, expectations, challenges, and concerns
- Actively listen and ask questions
- Seek advice, opinions, feedback, and direction from their mentors
- Be open to constructive criticism and feedback
- Respect their mentors' time and resources
- Be appreciative of mentors' support
- Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program
- Be comfortable in providing feedback to mentors regarding what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship
- Understand that mentees who are not meeting role expectations may be removed from the program

## MENTORING FORMAT

One-on-one mentoring connections are established through an online platform called Chronus. The program utilizes an algorithm based on profile information to recommend top matches to the mentee, who can then request mentoring from the mentor of their choice. Mentors and mentees who establish a connection will have access to a shared space that includes resources, tasks, and milestones to help guide the mentoring relationship.

## GETTING ACQUAINTED

*"Fit and chemistry must be considered when pairing the mentor and the protégé. If the two don't get along, it matters little what each can offer the other in terms of knowledge and skills."*

—Michael Zey, Building a Successful Formal Mentor Program

An important part of getting acquainted is determining compatibility. Schedule a few sessions to get to know each other before setting goals, and alert your [administrator](#) if you do not feel comfortable interacting with your mentor and having intimate discussions on sensitive topics. It is better to discover an imperfect match early on than to waste time in an unproductive relationship.

To begin getting to know each other, online messaging is an unthreatening, flexible approach. Many people find it easier to open up to someone new in writing. Your mentoring connection space includes a messaging component where you can get to know each other, plan meetings, or even discuss progress on tasks and milestones. To break the ice, ask your mentor questions and share a little about yourself, such as:

- ✓ Jobs, hobbies, and extracurricular activities
- ✓ Research, projects, or career-related accomplishments
- ✓ Ways of balancing work with your personal life
- ✓ Practice management and getting started in a career
- ✓ Your favorite class in college, favorite book, favorite movie, etc.

As you progress to more serious topics, you are also encouraged to voice professional concerns and challenges. If you find it difficult to discuss certain topics in technical terms, try to paraphrase your questions the best you can. You may find these discussions easier face-to-face or on the phone, but online communication can work if you are deliberate and thoughtful. Although it might take several online discussions to clarify a point, your mentor is likely to appreciate your interest and your passion to learn.

## MEANS TO COMMUNICATE

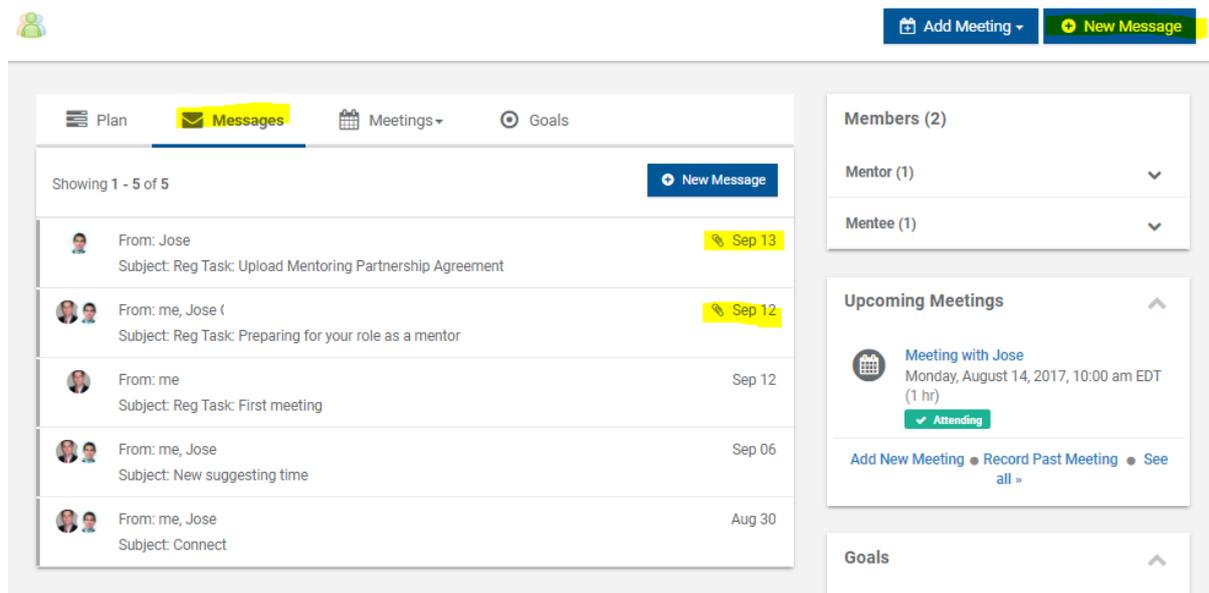
There are various ways in which you can communicate with your mentor. These include:

- ✓ Email
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Discussion boards
- ✓ Audio or video conferencing
- ✓ Meeting in person

When in-person interaction is not possible due to distance and time, we strongly encourage you to use the rich online communication mechanisms found in the mentoring portal, including the messaging feature in the mentoring connection space. Video conversations, while no substitute for in-person meetings, can provide a valuable sense of connection. Much of our communication is through body language and this modality at least provides a virtual face-to-face interaction.

### **File Sharing**

In many instances you and your mentoring partner will want to share files with each other. This can be done by using the message feature within your mentoring connection space. All of your messages will be stored under the "Messages tab" where you can locate past communications and file attachments.



The screenshot displays a mentoring portal interface. At the top right, there are two buttons: "Add Meeting" and "New Message". Below this is a navigation bar with tabs for "Plan", "Messages" (which is highlighted), "Meetings", and "Goals". The main content area shows a list of messages with details such as sender, subject, and date. The sidebar on the right contains sections for "Members (2)" listing "Mentor (1)" and "Mentee (1)", "Upcoming Meetings" with a specific meeting entry for "Meeting with Jose" on Monday, August 14, 2017, and "Goals".

You may also consider the following tools for sharing and storing files:

**Dropbox:** <https://www.dropbox.com/>

**Google Docs:** <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>

## SET YOUR GOALS AND SUMMARIZE COMPLETED SESSIONS

To have a successful mentoring relationship you must:

- ✓ Understand what you want from the mentoring relationship
- ✓ Set your goals
- ✓ Convey these goals to your mentor
- ✓ Discuss strategies that you can accomplish your goals
- ✓ After completing a discussion session, write a summary to form new action items

For a good start to the first two, answer the following questions:

- ✓ **What are your goals for this mentoring relationship?** (e.g., competency development, career advancement, leadership skills development, gain knowledge in a particular topic area, etc.)
- ✓ **How will you know if you reached these goals?** (e.g., improved performance, promoted, attained a new credential, etc.)
- ✓ **What challenges can you anticipate?** (e.g., availability of advancement opportunities, need to further your formal education, length of time needed to develop a new skill or competency)

Make the best use of your time with your mentor: take the time now to define your goals.

## EFFECTIVE ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Communication is a two-way process that includes just about any type of interaction with another person, from subtle to overt. Poor communication can leave us feeling angry or worried.

In person or on the phone, you can use voice modulation, facial expressions, and hand gestures to convey meaning. Because those cues are absent in writing, written communication is a skill and an art. The better people can express themselves, the more the relationship will deepen.

When communicating through writing, the following tips will help prevent miscommunication.

- ✓ **Use a meaningful subject line**—A good subject line ensures that the recipient recognizes the importance of your message and doesn't delete it accidentally. The subject line should also serve as a summary, conveying a clear idea of the topic you want to discuss.
- ✓ **Be clear and concise**—Take the time to write clear, concise messages. Correspondingly, if you receive messages that are not clear and concise, take the time to get clarification. Do you clearly understand your mentor's points? If not, provide an opportunity to restate, elaborate or reconsider the intended message.
- ✓ **Investigate assumptions**—What assumptions may have been made, whether stated explicitly or not? To uncover assumptions and prevent misinterpretations, state your understanding of your mentor's message or ask for clarification.
- ✓ **Communicate about communication**—It is very important to inform your mentor of your schedule well in advance. This prevents the unnecessary frustration of a communication breakdown.

Online messaging has its challenges, but it also has advantages in many situations. If you use the messaging section of your mentoring connection space liberally and thoughtfully, you'll be more productive.

## TEN REMINDERS FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING

1. Be receptive and open to feedback, differing perspectives, and new challenges.
2. Be proactive with your relationship. Set up the meetings and contact your mentor with updates or just to check in. Keep in touch.
3. Provide your mentor with an updated CV/resume.
4. Write your development path and share it with your mentor.
5. Discuss any current research, projects, or other career-related initiatives that play a key role in your development.
6. Create and share an agenda in advance. Be prepared with questions and updates when meeting your mentor.
7. After meeting with your mentor, send a summary recapping the discussion and action items for either party.
8. Send "thank you" notes to your mentor after he/she has spent time offering his or her guidance and support.
9. Share success stories, milestones, promotions, recognitions with the program administrator that you think are a result of the mentoring relationship.
10. Take advantage of this development opportunity and have fun!

## NETWORKING TIPS

Networking is a learned skill that takes time and practice to improve. Your mentor has likely leveraged a network of contacts at various times in life. Learn how your mentor built his or her network. Appreciate the effort that goes into maintaining these quality relationships. If your mentor is willing, ask for an introduction to contacts who may be able to help you reach your goals.

When you approach your mentor or any of his or her contacts, be sure to follow this networking etiquette:

- ✓ **Ask politely**—When asking for a favor, ask politely. Examples of ways to ask are: "Perhaps you can point me in the right direction," and "Maybe you could help me..."
- ✓ **Follow up**—Use the 48-hour rule. Respond to phone messages and emails within 48 hours, and send thank-you or nice-to-meet-you notes or emails after a meeting within 48 hours.
- ✓ **Mention your referrer**—When calling a person to whom someone referred you, mention your contact's name. For example, "John suggested I contact you about..."

We wish you the very best in building your network of contacts!

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Below are a few suggested activities to do with your mentor:

- ✓ Read a chapter of a relevant book each week/month and discuss how it applies in your situation.
- ✓ Use the results of an instrument such as the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator, Life Styles Instrument, DISC or any sort of 360 degree feedback as a basis for development.
- ✓ Pick (or imagine) a movie that represents your life. Which character are you? How do the events in the movie reflect your life/career?
- ✓ Prepare a list of questions and interview your mentor about their career or experience.
- ✓ Do some fact-finding about a relevant topic. Discuss what you discovered and how you might use it.
- ✓ Practice a conversation that you might need to have with your manager or colleague or during a job interview. Get feedback and coaching from your mentor to produce the outcomes you want.
- ✓ Draw a picture/make a collage or vision board to graphically represent where you see yourself going or what's important to you.

Here are some activity ideas if you are planning to meet your mentor in person:

- ✓ Meet for coffee or lunch and discuss lighthearted topics such as favorite classes, career paths, research or hobbies.
- ✓ Meet your mentor's colleagues and expand your network of contacts.
- ✓ Tour your mentor's workplace or research facility.
- ✓ Accompany the mentor in meetings or in their daily work as a silent observer. Then ask questions and discuss what you learned.
- ✓ Tour some of your favorite places in your city.
- ✓ Attend cultural or sporting events together.

## KEEP YOUR GOALS IN SIGHT

There are likely to be times in your mentoring relationship when progress might stagnate and you need to re-energize. Try the following:

- ✓ Revisit your goals. Are you on course?
- ✓ Are your goals too broad – should you re-define them into more manageable smaller goals?
- ✓ Do you need to extend the mentoring duration? Evaluate how long you will need to achieve your goals. With each communication, schedule a specific date to next check-in with your mentor, whether completed or not. Time-bounded goals are more likely to be realized. We all have competing priorities and it is good to put meetings on both of your calendars far in advance.

Take responsibility for driving success. Self-actualization and enthusiasm will help the mentoring relationship move forward. The point is to continually reaffirm goals and commitment. Your mentor will follow your lead.

## HELP DURING PERIODS OF TRANSITION

As you near the completion of your mentoring partnership, you may wonder whether your takeaways from the mentoring relationship will smooth your transition into future endeavors. You may have some loose ends to tie or some fears about moving on.

We encourage you and your mentor to discuss your transition to life post-partnership. Your mentor may be in a position to help you better prepare for what lies ahead and reduce any anxieties you have about potential changes in your near future.

## NEED FOR A GOOD CLOSURE

When mentoring partnerships end, some do so with goals accomplished. Some do not, for a number of reasons. Yet even unproductive mentoring relationships can benefit from good closure. A successful exit strategy includes five steps:

1. **Processing conclusions**—Process the learning that took place because of the relationship while working towards goals.
2. **Integrating what was learned**—Discuss how to apply the learning and take it to the next level.
3. **Celebrating success**—Plan a mutually satisfying way to celebrate achievement and new beginnings.
4. **Redefining the relationship**—Talk about how the relationship is to continue, and what it will look like: will you transition from a professional mentoring relationship to that of colleagues or friends? Will the relationship cease entirely?
5. **Moving on**—Both partners let go and identify ways of keeping in touch, if appropriate and mutually desired.

## PROVIDE REGULAR FEEDBACK

It is important to provide feedback regularly on your mentoring experience to the program [administrators](#). Please complete any surveys you receive. Your feedback will help your administrators learn how to serve you better. In addition, provide your mentor with constructive feedback as you go, to improve the quality of the relationship and to support your mentor's future mentoring endeavors.

## WHEN MENTORING DOESN'T WORK

If you feel that the mentor you have been paired with is not working, let us know. The earlier the better so we can work to pair you with someone who is better suited to help you meet your goals.