

Making mentoring work remotely

A Practical Guide

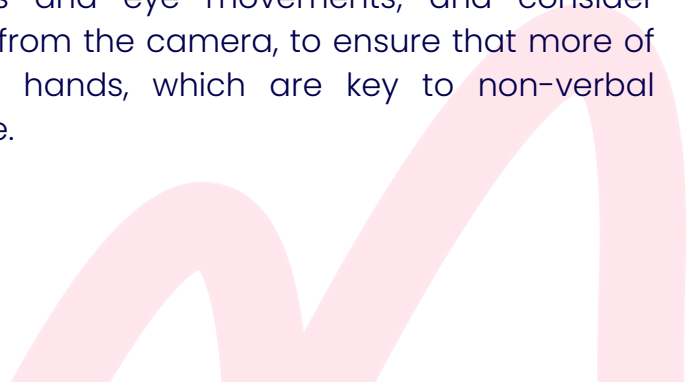
Mentoring has traditionally been restricted to those in close proximity who are able to have face-to-face interactions. But what happens when physical meetings become impractical or impossible? Perhaps one person moves to a different part of the country, or even to another country. The Covid pandemic taught us to embrace technology and take meetings online, and mentoring is no exception. This guide explains how to make mentoring work remotely.

Mentoring in the Virtual World: In an age of digital connectivity, remote mentoring is not just possible, it can be highly effective. However, it comes with its own considerations and constraints. Here is how to navigate the remote mentoring landscape:

Practical Considerations: There are several practical elements that need to be considered when mentoring remotely. These include network speed and reliability (these can vary significantly depending on geographical location, device etc.); the preferred platform (note that not all videoconferencing software is accessible from all countries); the difference between time zones, and related factors such as daylight saving time; and how notes and other resources will be shared, both during and after sessions. Mentors and mentees will need to bear all these factors in mind during the contracting stage, to ensure the best experience for both parties.

What's Different: Remote mentoring does present some unique challenges when compared to in-person sessions. Understanding these differences is essential for successfully managing remote relationships:

- **Limited Body Language:** One of the most significant differences is the reduced ability to read body language and non-verbal cues. To compensate, make sure to use a higher-definition webcam to facilitate picking up on facial expressions and eye movements; and consider positioning yourself slightly further from the camera, to ensure that more of the body – and particularly the hands, which are key to non-verbal expression – are more clearly visible.



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- **Cultural Considerations:** In global mentoring, cultural differences can be a significant factor in managing the relationship. These may include elements such as normal meal times, the requirement to pray or other religious observation, and even whether or not a webcam may be used (for example, some Muslim women prefer not to be seen on webcam, restricting calls to voice-only). Establish clear communication protocols together from the start and be sensitive to such cultural nuances to ensure that remote mentoring sessions remain a safe and respectful space for both parties.
- **Technical Hurdles:** Technical issues can disrupt the flow of remote mentoring sessions. Always have a backup plan for connectivity issues and encourage mentees to test their technology in advance of each session.

Way Forward: Mentoring remotely is not a compromise; it is an opportunity to expand your reach and engage with mentees worldwide. Embrace technology, stay flexible, and remember that the essence of mentoring lies in the exchange of knowledge and guidance. Whether you are a mentor or mentee, adaptability and clear communication will be your allies in the virtual mentoring journey. In a world where physical distance is no longer a barrier, remote mentoring opens doors to a wider, more diverse pool of mentors and mentees.

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