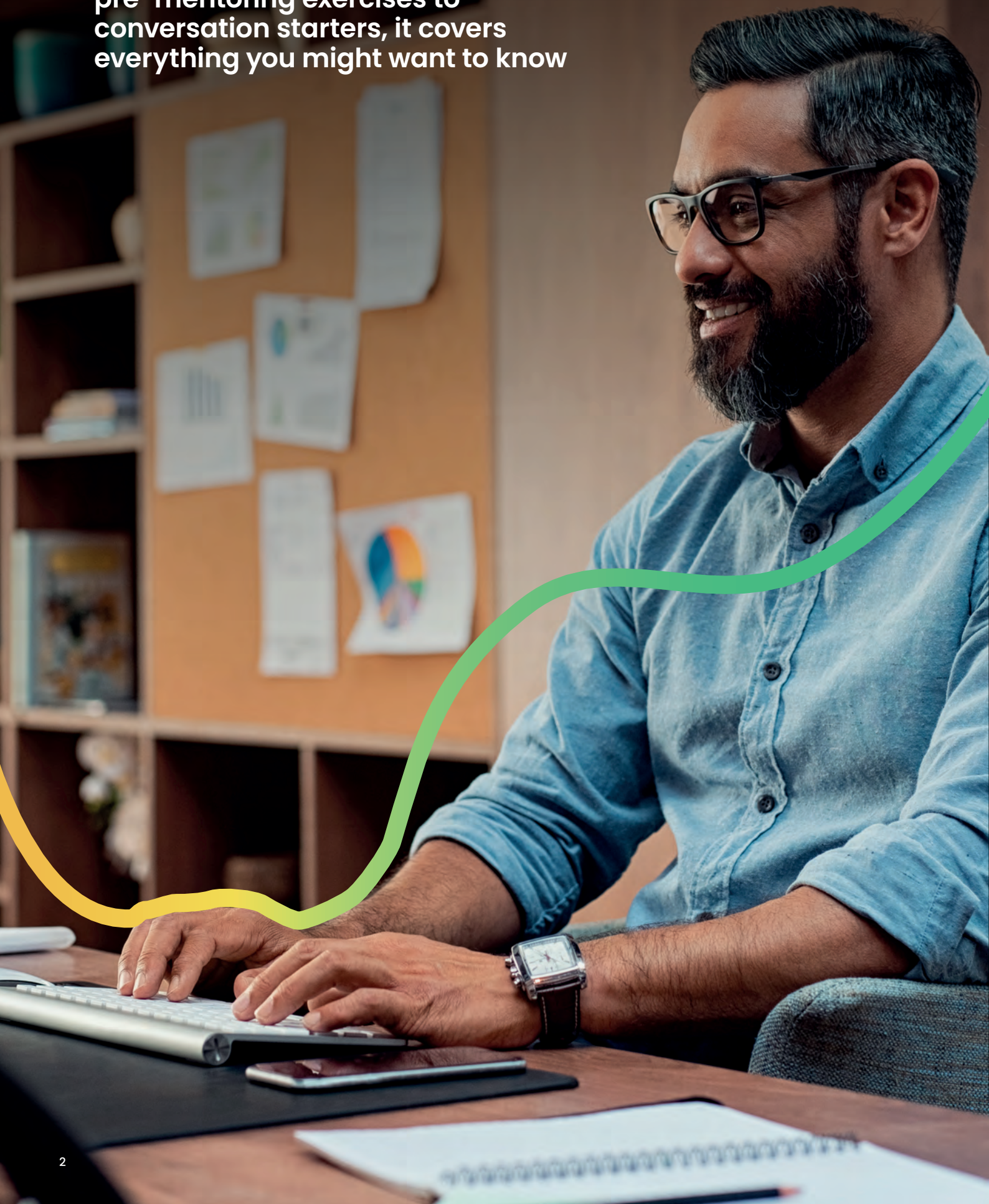


# APM Mentoring Programme Guide



**Whether you're going to be a mentor or a mentee, this guide will help you to get ready. From pre-mentoring exercises to conversation starters, it covers everything you might want to know**



# Introduction

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Welcome to the APM community. Thanks for signing up to the APM Mentoring Programme. We hope this guide is a useful starting point to your mentoring journey.

Mentoring is a valuable experience for all professionals, no matter where you are on the career ladder. For those just starting out, it offers guidance, advice and support. For those in the middle stages, it offers a sounding board on progression, promotion and work-related challenges. For those in the latter stages, it's a rewarding way to share career lessons, help someone else progress and hear fresh perspectives.

Whether you're going to be a mentor or a mentee, this guide will help you to get ready. From pre-mentoring exercises to conversation starters, it covers everything you might want to know.

Don't forget to check out the [APM Community](#) online, where you'll find other useful resources and content on mentoring.



# All about mentoring

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## What exactly is mentoring?

The purpose of mentoring is “to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be,” according to Eric Parsloe, one of the founders of the European Mentoring and Coaching Council. It’s about imparting sage advice to people who need it, either through an organised scheme or as part of an informal agreement.

Mentors are typically experienced and trusted leaders, while mentees tend to be in the earlier stages of their career. Mentors always have something to offer; mentees always have something to learn.

A mentor is different from a line manager or boss. They’re not there to tell the mentee what to do and they’re typically from outside the mentee’s organisation, so their advice is impartial and free from office politics. A mentor is also different from a career coach. Coaching partnerships tend to be more short term; they involve structured sessions tailored to a specific goal or outcome – and coaches charge for their services. They’re like fitness trainers for business.

A mentor can be anyone with relevant experience under their belts; they’ve been there, done that and got the T-shirt. They’re there to listen, share their wisdom and deliver honest insights, constructive feedback and encouragement to help the mentee to achieve their career goals.

Mentoring often delves into sensitive areas and may leave mentees feeling vulnerable, so it’s important that the power of the mentor is never exploited. To ensure good practice, the European Mentoring and Coaching Council has a [Global Code of Ethics](#), which covers the following areas:

- **Competence**

The mentor must be able to meet the mentee’s needs, and that means paying attention to their own professional development.

- **Context**

Creating a productive relationship and environment.

- **Boundary management**

The mentor will not exceed their professional competency; if the mentee would be better supported by another professional with a different area of expertise, then the mentor will act on that.

- **Integrity**

Confidentiality is key; information will only be shared when agreed.

- **Professionalism**

Mentoring is about responding to the learning needs of the mentee and never exploiting them.

# How does it all work?

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Once you've signed up to the APM Mentoring Programme and read our terms and conditions, you can search the list of mentors and find one who matches your own interests.

If your mentor request is unsuccessful, you can pick another. If your mentor accepts, we'll put you in contact with each other so you can arrange a chemistry meeting – an initial chat to make sure you click. From that point on, it's up to you two to maintain the relationship. We'll take a step back but will be on hand should any problems arise.

The first thing is to agree how much time you'll both be able to dedicate to the process. Agree on how frequent your meetings should be, how they'll take place (in person, over the phone, online) and how long each session will last. It's important for both of you to talk about what you expect from the mentoring relationship so that there are no surprises later on.

It's also worth sharing why you've chosen to become a mentor/mentee and get to know each other a little bit. First meetings always need an icebreaker. Talk about what you each hope to get out of the mentoring process and discuss your priorities, leading you nicely into some homework before session two.

At this point, it might be worth mentees jumping to [page 6](#) to see our recommended exercises to undertake before the first session. Mentors should flip to [page 8](#). We've also provided a [template agreement](#).

## Five key features of a mentoring relationship

- a strong rapport that is built and maintained
- mutual respect for each other's commitment
- clear communication
- dedication to self-learning
- proper emphasis on professional ethics when opportunities arise



# For mentees

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So, you're ready to be mentored. We've thought about some useful things you can do to prepare for the mentoring process and have created a handy checklist below. Some self-reflective exercises and activities are a great place to start. Make sure you check out our mentoring agreement and fill it in before your first session.

## 1. Look inwards

Take some time to do some CPD-style work on your strengths and weaknesses before your first session. This is useful as it gives your mentor a quick insight about you, and they'll be able to reflect on how their experience can be most useful to you.

## 2. Take a step back

In our day-to-day working lives, it's easy to be focused on short-term priorities. Things like working with quarterly budgets, a fast-approaching launch deadline, or even just an employee being off sick for a few days can quickly rise to the top of our list. Mentoring gives you an opportunity to think in the longer term about your career, your skills and your future. It gives you the breathing space to put aside your short-term problems for the time being and look at the larger picture. Mentoring is a chance to reinvigorate your long-term career aspirations through valuable conversations with someone who's already been through it.

## 3. Make a priority list

What's keeping you awake at night? Using your SWOT analysis and skills exercises, as well as thinking about your career as a whole and how you've reached this stage, which questions spring to mind? Write them down in no particular order, then come back the next day and prioritise them. This not only helps you to realise your most pressing issues, but also gives your mentoring meetings a structure.

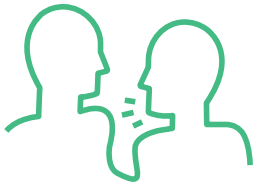
## 4. List some solutions

When thinking about your priority list, try to think of some possible solutions to discuss with your mentor. Your mentor can't do all the heavy lifting but they can ease the load and help you to explore the options and opportunities.

### A great mentee should...

- prepare for mentoring sessions
- be open and honest with their mentor about what they feel they need
- focus on the future and spend time working towards their agreed goals
- ask for – and implement – feedback
- be respectful of the mentor's time

## Three must-read articles for mentees



### Why you should establish a mentoring relationship

In a world of constant change, the human experience still anchors our professional lives.

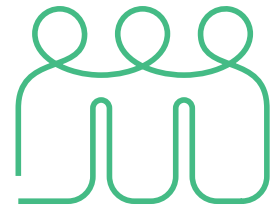
[Read article](#)



### How to work your way up the career ladder

Advancing your own career takes real planning. Here are six tips on how to be deliberate about climbing the career ladder.

[Read article](#)



### Supplement mentoring with career advice from young project managers

We talked to four project managers about their early career lessons so you can learn from their experiences.

[Read article](#)

### For mentees, mentoring offers...

- a safe space to share your career concerns and challenges
- a source of knowledge, advice and inspiration
- a sounding board and role model
- support and guidance to help you reach your potential
- the confidence to take your career to the next level



Don't forget you can [log your CPD hours](#) for mentoring.



# For mentors

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In the early stages of the relationship, you'll take more of a lead. Later, as the mentee's confidence and understanding grow, the balance will shift. As such, it's important for you to be well prepared for the first few sessions. To help you get going, we've rounded up a few activities and articles, and listed the top qualities of a mentor.

## Mentor checklist

### 1. Reflect on your own skills

Think about your own career and what's led you to this point. In every role you've had, you've needed a unique set of skills. Why not quickly jot down the different roles and industries you've worked in, and the core skills you've needed in each? This will help identify your strengths, show the experience and knowledge you bring to the table and will serve as a handy document to refer to during your sessions. You can also read through [our research on project leadership skills](#) and see how many you already have.

### 2. Be authentic

Being a mentor comes with a level of responsibility. Remember: mentees may be slightly intimidated by your career experience. To make the relationship truly equal, you'll have to do a bit of work to make sure you come across as authentic. Share anecdotes – not only the times you fixed a problem, but also the times when things went wrong. [Empathy is a top-tier soft skill leaders need](#). It's time to exercise yours.

### 3. Be organised

Mentoring is a time commitment for both you and your mentee. Be realistic about how much time you can dedicate to the relationship and how contactable you'll be outside of your sessions. If you're asking the mentee to do some work and send it to you before the session, make sure you also give yourself time to read it thoroughly enough to give solid feedback. If you overpromise your time, you'll be letting your mentee down.





## Three must-read articles for mentors



### The must-have qualities of a first-class mentor

How do you know you're ready to mentor through the ups and downs of this highly varied and challenging role?

[Read article](#)



### How to approach mentoring with the right mindset

Understand the difference between mentoring and coaching, and how to approach the relationship.

[Read article](#)



### Why mentoring pays off

Read first-hand accounts of how young professionals have benefited from mentoring.

[Read article](#)

### A great mentor should...

- pose challenging questions, give constructive feedback and be honest
- offer guidance and empower the mentee to make their own decisions
- open doors and share relevant professional contacts (with agreement from all concerned) to help the mentee progress their career
- share their own experiences, good and bad, and impart knowledge
- be respectful of the mentee's time, providing good notice of any unavoidable session cancellations and responding to messages within a reasonable space of time

### Being a mentor offers...

- the opportunity to share your skills, knowledge and experience
- a sense of purpose
- a way to 'pay it forward'
- a chance to sharpen your own leadership skills
- an opportunity to learn from the next generation



Don't forget you can [log your CPD hours for mentoring.](#)



# Case study

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## How mentoring helped me to become chartered

### A case study of a cross-industry mentoring relationship

Nikki Marks was working for a charity as a project manager and was eager to move forwards in her career – but didn't know who would be best placed to answer her questions on what applying for chartered status would entail. She then came across a blog by the [APM Women in Project Management Specific Interest Group](#) (WiPM SIG).

The group was launching a pilot mentoring scheme aimed at female project professionals where a female mentor would help other women in the project community to realise their goals. Nikki was matched up with Vicki Griffiths. "I was part of the WiPM SIG for three years and a key goal was encouraging more women to become chartered," says Vicki. "When the opportunity to join this mentoring scheme came up, I jumped at the chance; I wanted to be a role model to other women starting out in project management."

Vicki was passionate about supporting female project managers, in particular, because many women she encountered were "uncertain that they had what it takes", despite the fact that they were usually skilfully managing complex projects already. Even though Vicki and Nikki were working as project professionals

in different industries, they both agree that the experience was hugely beneficial to them.

"I would certainly recommend the mentoring programme," comments Nikki. "To me, it has been extremely valuable, not just at bolstering my confidence in applying to become a Chartered Project Professional, but also in finding a female role model to ask questions and learn from. Going forwards, being chartered benefits me as it provides independent recognition of my skills to both employers and my peers."

For Vicki, on the other hand, mentoring has been an opportunity to empower other female project professionals and increase their visibility in a typically male-dominated profession.

"If you're thinking about becoming a mentor, I would really recommend it," says Vicki. "It's a great chance to give back to the project community and help others to achieve a significant goal in their professional career. Having more female Chartered Project Professionals also shows that we are a diverse profession and that gender is not a barrier to success."

**To me, it has been extremely valuable, not just at bolstering my confidence in applying to become a Chartered Project Professional, but also in finding a female role model to ask questions and learn from**

# How to structure an effective mentoring session

A mentoring session isn't just a cosy chat. It takes planning and preparation, on both sides. Here are some top tips to make mentoring work:



## Set clear objectives

Make sure you set an agenda for each meeting. This should include a review of the previous session and an outline of objectives. Always round up the meeting with clear next steps. Importantly, write these down to make sure action follows commitment. Continually review the mentoring arrangement, including what could be improved, to make sure you're both getting the most out of the meetings.

## Get your timings right

A mentoring session usually lasts between one and two hours. Mentors need to confirm this from the outset of the mentoring relationship, but also need to leave room for adjustment. Some mentees will respond better to shorter, more frequent meetings, while others will find it easier to have more detailed discussions at a different time.

## Be open and honest

A fruitful mentoring session depends on transparency, vulnerability and honesty, even when it's hard. Conversations shouldn't be constrained by judgement. To create a safe and trusted space, agree that what's discussed in the mentoring sessions remains confidential – what's said there, stays there.

# Mentoring conversation starters

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To help get the conversation flowing, here are some typical questions that might crop up in your mentoring meeting, plus tips on how best to address the issue.

I'm a bit stuck in my career. I need help to figure out my next step but I don't know where to begin.

**Mentee:** Undertake an evaluation of your skills and priorities (such as your industry or sector experience, or personal choices such as being in a city or close to family). By focusing on smaller areas, you'll be able to see the bigger picture.

**Mentor:** Ask your mentee about their career story and their current role. Pick out areas they're passionate about, as well as areas they seem uninterested in or stressed by. How could they turn that list into a forward step?

I struggle with decision-making. While I understand how to weigh up the pros and cons, making the final call is tough. How can mentoring help?

**Mentee:** Mentoring can lift your confidence and show you that you already have the skills – you just need to be more assertive in using them. Be honest when talking to your mentor about this problem so you can understand the root cause.

**Mentor:** Encourage your mentee to talk through why they feel unable to make the final decision. What's holding them back? Why are they second-guessing themselves?

I have a very specific problem that I need help with. What if I don't need a mentor after that?

**Mentee:** In some cases, the mentoring relationship may be quite short-lived and focused on one particular area. Try to look beyond that specific problem and explore whether you may benefit from cultivating the relationship for longer-term and broader career development.

**Mentor:** This is a fairly single-minded approach from a mentee, so try to engage using open questions to find out more about them. Are they only thinking in the short term? How can you help them broaden their vision? Would this mentee benefit from a coach instead?



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organisation for the project profession**



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**Association for Project Management**  
Ibis House, Regent Park, Summerleys Road  
Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 9LE  
0845 458 1944  
[apm.org.uk](http://apm.org.uk)



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