

Workplace mentoring guidelines

Mentoring builds the workforce of today, and tomorrow. It involves the sharing of knowledge, skills and best practices - safety, knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

Workplace learning opportunities are happening all the time. Mentoring is a great way to capitalize on those moments to develop Essential Skills, along with other skills.

Why develop mentoring within your business?

- You demonstrate your commitment to building a learning culture;
- It fosters teaching & learning skills (including Essential Skills) in the workplace;
- It fosters team work;
- It encourages employee engagement;
- It creates an environment of trust, belonging, understanding, support, and encouragement for a diverse workforce.

DAIMLER TRUCKS, with multiple offices spread across North America, decided to provide a mentoring program to all of their 4,000 office-based employees.

“Our aim is multipurpose mentoring. We’re providing career development and self-development of mentors and mentees. After witnessing more interregional connectivity, company engagement, and knowledge transfer, Daimler plans to add more mentoring tracks for corporate responsibility and new-hire onboarding to continue their goals of improving employee engagement, learning, and satisfaction.”

In this section you will find:

- Mentoring explained
- Helpful tips to develop mentoring within your business
- Mentoring guidelines
- Steps to teaching skills

1. Mentoring Explained

The word is from Greek Myth - Mentor was a **teacher & protector**

Mentoring is when an experienced employee (mentor) works with a less experienced employee (mentee) to help foster **skill development** and professional **growth**.

2. Tips to developing mentoring within your business

Tip 1: Build interest

Build interest in mentoring and identify individuals who are potential mentors and mentees.

- Promote mentoring during group meetings, newsletters and other communications.
- Discuss mentoring with individuals during performance reviews and one-on-one discussions.
- Build mentoring questions into your workplace needs analysis to gauge the level of interest for participating in this type of skills development activity.

Tip 2: Determine whether mentoring will be informal or a more formal program

Mentoring programs can be either formal or informal.

- Formal programs are often structured in mentee/mentor pairings, meeting expectations, goals/outcomes, time frames, reporting, etc.
- Informal programs are more relaxed- often mentees choose their own mentor and meeting times/frequency, duration, topics, etc. are determined solely by the mentee/mentor with little or no input or guidance from the organization.

Tip 3: Select Mentors & Mentees

When selecting mentors, choose individuals who are interested in mentoring and have the required knowledge, skills and experience that will benefit the mentees. They should be positive role models with good interpersonal skills.

When selecting mentees, select individuals who are interested in skills development.

Tip 4: Establish Expectations, Duration and Time frames

It is critical that the mentee and their mentor have trust and mutual respect. To ensure this, discuss and agree upon expectations around topics such as: confidentiality, meeting times, locations, durations, etc.

3. Mentoring Guidelines¹

a) Mentoring Responsibilities

SAFETY - Always a Focus	<i>Actively support and promote a safe working & learning environment</i>
KNOWLEDGE - What you know	<i>Learn, practice, and promote the highest standards of excellence</i>
ATTITUDE - Your approach	<i>A positive approach to people, work and learning</i>

¹ Mentoring Guidelines and Steps to teaching skills were adapted from Workplace mentoring toolkit, Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development

BEHAVIOUR - What you do *Model, promote, and share the highest standards of excellence*

b) Learning Focused

There is no one right way to learn - we all have ways of doing things that work best. There are three main **learning styles**:

SEEING - Visual: Using Your Eyes

Learn best by seeing a picture, diagram, or demonstration of how things work / fit together.

- ✓ *Like to see a diagrams and/or image*
- ✓ *Like to watch a demonstration*

HEARING - Auditory: Using Your Ears

Learn best by hearing a description or explanation from someone who knows.

- ✓ *Like to listen to instructions*
- ✓ *Like to read things out loud*

DOING - Physical: Using Your Hands

Learn best by actually putting things together or taking them apart.

- ✓ *Like to explore and try out*
- ✓ *Like to participate in demonstration*

TIP: Figure out the things that help you to learn best. Knowing **how you learn best** can help you in getting what you need to learn, and can help you in teaching others.

c) Learning Needs

Learning needs are what we **require to have success**. We can learn more easily if learning needs are met.

Start by thinking about the employee.

- Who is the employee?
- What is the **motivation** for wanting to learn?
- What are the employee's interests and experiences?
- Strike up a conversation during lunch or break. Find out what **interests** them. Work on building trust.
- Does the employee have the important foundation for learning - their **essential skills**? A person can have strong driving skills, but without the skills to make new learning stick, they can still fail.

4. STEPS to Teaching Skills

Workplace learning is happening all the time. Each time you help an employee learn a skill, it is a lesson.

There are many ways YOU can help employees - use these coaching steps:

STEP 1 - Identify the point of the lesson

Provide employees with a sense of direction to the learning. Focus the learning.

STEP 2 - Link the lesson

Show employees the connections between the skill and the overall job - the relationship between what's known and what's coming.

STEP 3 - Demonstrate the skill

Show employees the skill and explain why and how it is done. Ensure you have sufficient time and resources.

STEP 4 - Provide practice

Set up chances for employees to use a new skill - it is the chance to make mistakes that won't cost too much.

STEP 5 - Give feedback

Tell employees how they are doing. Feedback should describe what is happening and help in planning next steps.

STEP 6 - Assess learning

Determine the progress employees are making. Be sure to assess both individual skills and overall progress.

TEACHING Tips

- Before teaching a skill, remember timing is everything
- Be aware of what is going on around you
- Choose an appropriate time
- It is a good time to teach a skill when:
 - ✓ You have all the **materials** you will need
 - ✓ You will have enough time
 - ✓ You will have **few distractions** or interruptions
 - ✓ You think the apprentice will be ready
- Think about how you can manage your time - balance to accomplish what needs to get done. Prioritize - what needs to be done first? What can be done quickly and/or easily?
- When the time is right, clearly signal the start of a lesson:
 - ✓ “This looks like a good time to show you something...”
 - ✓ “Let’s take a few minutes right now to go through this...”
- Pay attention to people’s interests - ask for input:
 - ✓ “What do you think is the best way for you?”

Step 1: POINT of the Lesson

Employees need to see the **value** of what they are doing. Identifying the point of the lesson meets this need.

When you teach someone a new skill, you very quickly need to establish the point - **what you are trying to accomplish**. It can be as simple as stating what the employee will be able to do when completed:

- “When we’ve completed this you’ll be able to...”
- “After this, you’ll be able to...”

Guidelines:

- Keep the point of the lesson in **action terms**, things you can see people doing (not what you think they understand)
- You should be able to tell by watching whether they were successful
- Stating the point of the lesson helps the employee have more focus. The employee will be more aware of what is happening, and what to expect.

Step 2: LINK the Lesson

Employees need to understand **how new learning fits**. Linking the lesson meets this need. Help employees see how new skills link to what they know.

Linking the lesson draws attention to the **relationships** between skills. Be aware of how you link new learning to existing knowledge and skills.

When you teach a skill, be aware of **how you organize** things for the employee.

Learning can be **ordered** in different ways:

- **Simple to Complex Order:** Starts with the easier skills and projects before moving up to more difficult skills. Learning the simpler skills first helps build confidence.
- **Start to Finish Order:** Sometimes skills fall into a natural order – how they are performed. This helps the employee learn the flow of the work.
- **Learner Interest:** A motivating way to learn that builds on enthusiasm, helping the employee learn.

Tip: Remember, there is **no one “right way”** to set the order of lessons. Think about the situation, and what might work best. **Tip:** Be on the lookout for opportunities to show relationships.

Step 3: DEMONSTRATE the Skill

Employees need a chance to **see and try**. Demonstrating the skill meets this need.

Show employees the skill - share your experience and what you have learned.

Demonstrating is a **show and tell**:

For the **“tell”** part, be sure to **explain** the skill:

- **Why** is the skill important?
- **Who** performs the skill?
- **What** is required (tools/materials)?
- **Where** does it get performed?
- **When** is it safe to do the skill?

For the **“show”** part, be sure to show **how** the skill is done:

- Model best practices
- Use the tools/materials the employee will use
- Go through EACH step involved in the skill
- Go SLOWLY - take your time

- Describe each step as it is completed
- Encourage employees to move around and watch from different angles
- Ask questions for clarification or explanation

When employees are ready, they should get the chance to try, with guidance. They go from **actively seeing** to **actively doing**.

Remember to recap by summarizing what you did:

“This is how we did it...”

Tip: Remember what to watch for. **Tip:** Some skills may take several guided trials - try asking the employee to **demonstrate the skill while describing** each step on the way.

Step 4: PROVIDE Practice

Employees need a chance to practice their skills. Providing practice meets this need. Look for chances for employees to practice where **mistakes won't cost too much**.

Practice does make perfect, and there are **different types**:

- **Guided practice** is the final stage of the demonstration and the beginning of the practice. The journey person stays with the employee and provides step-by-step guidance.
- **Limited practice** is when the employee is ready to work on his/her own, in a defined way (maybe with scrap materials).
- **Independent practice** is when the employee is skilled enough to work on own with actual job materials and tools.
- Practice doesn't just happen - it is important to set up the conditions (how it will go):
 - ✓ Safety procedures related to skill practice
 - ✓ Where and when it is OK to do skill practice
 - ✓ Materials and tools to be used for skill practice
 - ✓ Who will supervise or review skill practice

It is important to clarify expectations for how the practice will work and to establish checkpoints to be sure progress is being made.

Repeat and recycle - repetition does not mean a failure. The need to recycle is a natural part of learning. Don't be afraid to go back and repeat earlier steps.

Tip: Practice makes perfect! Always be aware of how things are going - think about what is working, and **where changes might be necessary**.

Step 5: PROVIDE Feedback

Employees need feedback. Providing feedback is essential. **Communicate** with your employee.

Communication is a big part of teaching skills. Feedback helps a person maintain or improve performance. **What is said (and not said)** are both part of the message.

There are two main **types** of feedback:

- **Supportive feedback** encourages the employee who is doing well. It is a strong motivator. It focuses on the best way of doing things and it gives credit for progress.
- **Corrective feedback** points out the behavior and its negative result and makes suggestions for improvement. It helps employees realize how they need to improve.
 - ✓ **Clearly describe observations** - what you saw
 - ✓ **Focus on behaviour** - withhold judgment - you do not know the employee's motivations
 - ✓ **Provide direct feedback** - talk to the employee yourself
 - ✓ **Provide immediate feedback** - feedback at the time it is relevant
 - ✓ **Help the employee to picture their action** - they need to be able to picture exactly what they did

Tip: Give the employee the next step in the process - provide suggestions of what to do the next time. **Tip:** Corrective feedback is easier to take if it comes with some supportive feedback. Provide feedback that **helps employees to think it through** for themselves.

Step 6: ASSESS Learning

Employees need a **sense of progress**. Conducting regular assessments meets this need. Make the time to do regular assessments of employees.

Assessments provide a sense of progress.

Skill assessments focus on specific skills to determine how performance is going.

Progress assessments focus on **overall** progress being made.

There are different ways of assessing:

- Observe - Watch the employee's performance
- Discuss - Ask the employee questions
- Challenge - Set up a challenge or demonstration
- Performance - Check the employee's performance of tasks
- Self Assessment - Employee assesses own work

Regardless of how assessment happens, it is important to **discuss the assessment**.
Communication is an essential part of assessment.

Involve employees in what is happening. When people are involved in what is happening, they are more likely to learn. A good way to get employees involved is to get them talking about how things have been going

- “Next time, how could we do that differently?”
- “How could I have made that clearer for you?”

Tip: Remember that different things work for different people. Think about what you are doing, how you are doing it, and the **pacing** of things.

SKILL Assessment Checklist

A guide for assessing skills on a day-to-day basis

What is the **specific skill** that I am assessing?

Observe: What did I see as I watched the employee perform the skill?

Discuss: Did I ask the employee questions about completing the skill?

Challenge: How could I set up a challenge/demonstration for the skill?

Assessor: Could I have another expert assess performance for the skill?

Self Assessment: Have I encouraged the employee to assess his/her own performance on the skill?

Follow Up: Did I discuss the skill assessment with the employee? Did I identify areas of strength and strategies for improvement?

Involvement: Did I involve the employee in the skill assessment?