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# **Mentoring in Construction:** A how-to guide for mentors



Mentoring can be a game-changer for pre-apprentices, apprentices and employers in the building and construction industry. It is about more than just nurturing job skills – it tackles real challenges, both on the job and in life, shaping how apprentices see and navigate their careers and the building and construction industry.

For employers, the benefits are clear: higher productivity, better workforce retention, better relationships, and improved apprenticeship completion rates.

But what makes an effective mentor, and how can you become one? These guidelines are designed to help you build strong, supportive mentoring relationships. They draw on research and real-world examples with actionable tips to help you tailor your approach and maximise the positive impact you have on your mentor.

**Mentoring should be a win-win arrangement.**

So, by using this resource and creating a positive mentoring experience, you'll be creating better outcomes for both you and the next generation of WA's construction workers.

**Not a bad deal, hey?**



# What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a professional relationship where a more experienced mentor provides guidance, advice, and support to a less experienced mentee.

It can be an invaluable way of ensuring a mentee develops the skills, understanding, and knowledge they need to thrive in the building and construction industry.

This Mentor Guide has been put together with the specifics of the building and construction industry in mind, with the hands-on nature of the industry and the critical importance of safety requiring a more holistic approach.

In short, mentoring:

- Bridges the gap between formal training and the workplace
- Focuses on both work-based skills and wellbeing
- Is based on a relationship of trust

There are two key aspects of mentoring: professional and personal.

## Professional Development

Work and career aspects of mentoring



This covers things such as:

- Workplace inductions
- Technical skills
- Handling workplace conflict and harassment
- Managing relationships with peers and supervisors
- Workplace mediation
- Work performance issues, including communication and time management roles and responsibilities
- Training requirements
- Workplace health and safety
- Career advice and/or industry information

## Personal Development

Psychosocial aspects of mentoring



This covers things such as:

- Providing advice on managing job related stress
- Work-life balance
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Developing confidence and self-esteem
- Building strong work relationships
- Assistance with solving workplace conflicts

It is important to remember that a mentorship covering both professional and personal development will have the best results.





# How can I ensure I do it well?



## Formal mentoring

Formal mentoring is a more structured approach, with specific time and resources allocated. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities are established, and progress is regularly evaluated. More often than not, the mentor is initiated by the employer, and they are commonly the apprentice's workplace supervisor or trainer.

Examples of formal mentoring in the building and construction industry include:

- CTF's Construction Careers Scholarship Program, where Year 11 and 12 students receive formal mentoring while completing a Certificate II in Construction Pathways.
- The HIA Building Women program provides dedicated and formalised mentoring, training, events and awards to support women to build an exciting and challenging career in the residential building industry.



## Informal mentoring

Informal mentoring more commonly occurs on worksites, where time pressures to complete the job restrict opportunities for formal mentoring sessions. These mentoring relationships often develop more naturally as apprentices gravitate to those with similar backgrounds and potentially even shared interests.

Examples of informal mentoring in the building and construction industry include:

- Mentoring that occurs through TAFEs
- Employers
- Group Training Organisations outside of formalised mentoring programs
- Mentoring received from family and friends
- Other colleagues
- Apprentices who are further into their training

## Collective mentoring

There is a lot of 'shared responsibility' in collective mentoring. This is because apprentices do not rely on one mentor during their apprenticeship, they have a 'circle of support' that could include family, friends, teachers, specialist mentors, unions, coworkers or tradespeople already working in the industry.

Examples of collective mentoring in the building and construction industry include:

- The CTF Civil Construction Pilot Program includes induction sessions run by CTF, where Nudge also attend to offer assistance and raise awareness of the personalised advice and tailored mentoring support they offer apprentices.



# Understanding your mentee

It is important to understand that different groups within the building and construction industry have different barriers, and as a mentor, it is paramount that these needs are catered to.

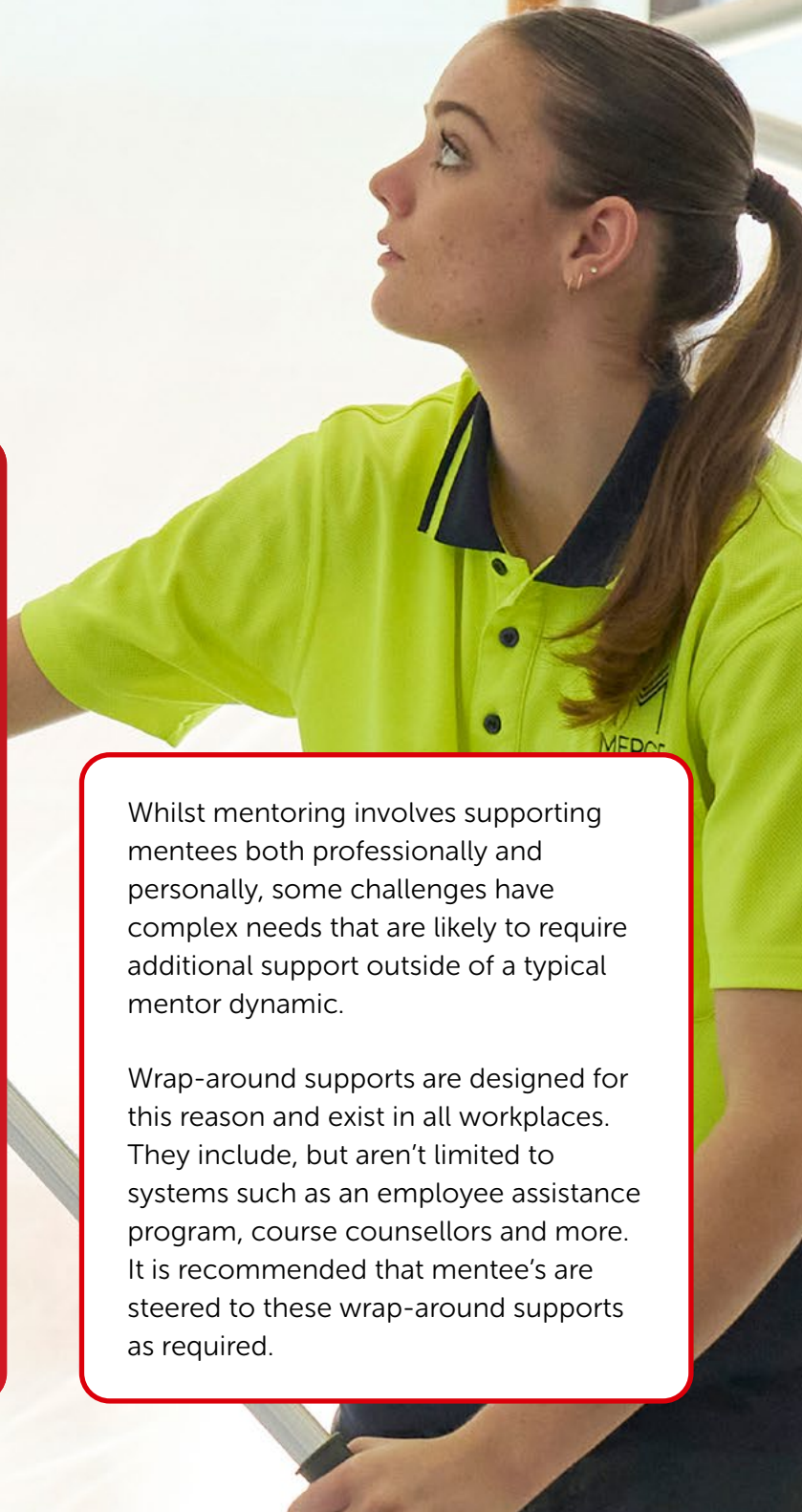
Some examples of groups that are at risk of not completing their apprenticeships are:

- First Nations people
- Women
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People with disability
- People with mental health challenges
- People from low-socioeconomic backgrounds
- People in regional or remote areas
- People who face foundational skills barriers (language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills)

Some people may fall into more than one of these identified groups – which may make their experience as an apprentice even more challenging.

Whilst mentoring involves supporting mentees both professionally and personally, some challenges have complex needs that are likely to require additional support outside of a typical mentor dynamic.

Wrap-around supports are designed for this reason and exist in all workplaces. They include, but aren't limited to systems such as an employee assistance program, course counsellors and more. It is recommended that mentee's are steered to these wrap-around supports as required.



# Understanding yourself

Developing self-awareness is a critical step for mentors to enhance their effectiveness in guiding and supporting others.

To develop self-awareness, it is recommended that you take some time to complete the below tasks:

- Reflect on your own strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement and write these down
- Ask others around you (personally and professionally) what they perceive your strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement to be

Compare your own notes with the feedback from others. Are there similarities? What are some of the things you could work on off the back of this?

As well as mastering self-awareness, here are some further markers of a good mentor (from mentees themselves!):

## Hard skills

- Has the skills and technical knowledge required by the mentee - through experience and interpersonal skills rather than qualifications - a mentor who has navigated the same path and can provide guidance, support, practical advice and instruction.
- Provides advice to the mentee on financial support and learning support entitlements.
- Has knowledge of the industry bodies and relevant training within the industry.

## Soft skills

- Has well developed pastoral care skills, good communication and listening skills.
- Has the capacity to build rapport particularly with youth and apprentices from diverse backgrounds, and the ability to identify and understand behavioural problems and mental health issues.
- Develop, over time, a positive and trusting working relationship with the mentee. The mentor builds the mentee's confidence and respect by listening, being friendly, reliable, objective.
- Share your own experiences and celebrate the apprentice's achievements (big and small) along the way.
- The mentor ensures that personal information shared by the mentee remains confidential – whilst providing honest advice and feedback and avoids becoming judgemental, critical or emotionally involved.





# Setting up a structure

This is a practical exercise to ensure your reading gets put into practice!

Mentor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer these questions**

Mentee's name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1: Setting them up for success

1. What is the most important goal that the mentee wants to get out of being mentored?

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2. What are two goals that the mentee also wants to get out of being mentored?

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3. Are you, as the mentor, aligned with these goals?  
Are they realistic and achievable?



## Part 2: Helping them get there

4. How does your mentee prefer to engage?

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5. Based on the above, what mentoring approach will you base the mentorship around? Why?

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6. What are 2-3 goals you can set with the mentee, which will help them hit their objective(s)?

## Part 3: Implementation & monitoring

7. Based on the identified mentoring approach, how frequently are you going to catch up? Where will this be and what will it look like

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8. Who will lead the catch ups? The mentor or the mentee? Why?

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9. What is the timeframe of this mentorship? Why?

# A final few points on good practice

Congratulations! You now have the knowledge to help start your mentoring journey! Let's summarise everything in a few sharp points you can refer to as you need:



**Remember** that mentoring:

- Bridges the gap between formal training and the workplace
- Focuses on both work-based skills and wellbeing
- Is solely based on a relationship of trust



**Understand that mentoring consists of professional and personal development.** Make sure your mentoring covers both of these aspects.



**Identify your mentoring approach.** Are you undertaking formal, informal or collective mentoring? Why?



**Take time to understand your mentee's background** – are they fresh in the industry? What have their past experiences been both in life and work? Where might they need more help? What are their strengths and weaknesses?



**Think about your own self-awareness as a mentor** – what are the things that you may need to work on to foster a positive and productive mentor dynamic?



**Set up a structure** and make commitments to one another – mentoring is a two-way street. Based on your 'mentor guide sheet' what are the goals your mentee is here to achieve? How frequently are you catching up based on your identified and agreed mentor style?

**And importantly, have fun!** You and your mentee will get so much more out of this process if it is enjoyable, flexible, honest and meaningful.



# 5 key benefits of being a **mentor**

1

## **Personal satisfaction**

Gain fulfilment from fostering the growth and success of others

2

## **Skill development**

Enhance your leadership, communication and coaching skills

3

## **Networking opportunities**

Expand your professional connections through mentoring in a broader network

4

## **Fresh perspectives**

Be exposed to new insights and ideas and keep in touch with emerging trends and views

5

## **Improved reputation**

Elevate your professional standing and visibility in the industry

# 5 key benefits of being a **mentee**

1

## **Guidance and support**

Mentees receive personalised advice and encouragement, helping them navigate challenges and make informed decisions

2

## **Skill development**

Mentees can acquire new skills and knowledge through their mentor's experience and insights, enhancing their professional capabilities

3

## **Networking opportunities**

Mentorship often opens doors to the mentor's professional network, providing mentees with valuable connections

4

## **Increased confidence**

Having a mentor's support can boost a mentee's confidence, as they feel validated and encouraged in their career journey

5

## **Career advancement**

Mentors can help mentees identify growth opportunities, set career goals and provide feedback, ultimately aiding in their professional advancement





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