



Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

TEAR HERE

Mentoring and Essential Skills

This tool will help employers and practitioners support the development of essential skills in the workplace through mentoring. It supports the development of an informal mentoring system in the workplace and includes tools that can help employees develop and maintain positive and successful mentoring relationships.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is the pairing of an experienced or skilled person (mentor) with a person who would like to improve his or her skills (mentee). The mentor acts as a role model and supports the mentee by sharing knowledge, resources and advice to help them improve their skills.

Mentoring can happen in different ways. For example, it can be as simple as an employee showing another how to complete a particular task. Or, it can be more involved where employees commit to long-term mentoring relationships.

Why Mentoring?

Mentoring is an effective way to help employees improve their essential skills, and it doesn't require a lot of resources to be successful. It can also reinforce strong relationships among employees, support a learning culture in the workplace, and increase productivity. There are also many benefits for the mentee and mentor:

BENEFITS FOR THE MENTEE	BENEFITS FOR THE MENTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved skills ■ Increased self-confidence ■ Increased motivation ■ Increased job satisfaction ■ Increased productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased opportunities to share skills and knowledge ■ Increased opportunities to develop leadership skills ■ Increased job satisfaction ■ Increased sense of value in the workplace

Getting Started

Follow these three steps to establish a mentoring system in the workplace:

- 1 Tell employees about mentoring and how it can be used to improve essential skills.
- 2 Encourage employees to develop mentoring relationships in the workplace if they feel it would benefit them.
- 3 Remove this page and distribute the attached support tools to employees (e.g. post them on bulletin boards, leave them in lunchrooms).

Helpful Tips

- Use team meetings, lunch hour learning sessions, company newsletters or emails to communicate how mentoring can be used to develop essential skills.
- Plan events where interested employees can network with potential mentors or mentees. If possible, invite a mentor or mentee to talk about his/her experience.
- Use mentoring to train new employees.
- While most mentoring occurs in pairs, there are other approaches to consider:

Mentoring Circles – A mentor works with a group of mentees. This is a good solution when it is difficult to find mentors. The mentor provides advice and guidance to the group and encourages the mentees to help one another.

Peer or Team Mentoring – Team members or peers mentor each other. Peer mentoring may be established to address a particular issue or problem. This type of mentoring is appropriate for cross-training (training across different jobs and/or tasks), team building and developing the skills and knowledge of new employees.

Notes:

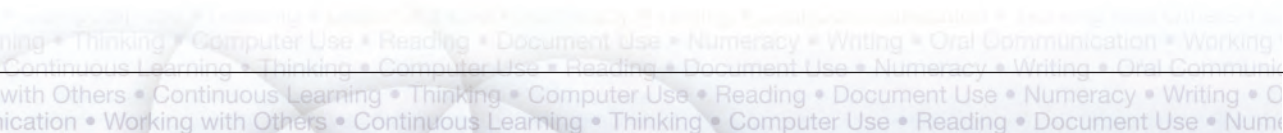
To learn more about literacy and essential skills and other related tools, visit hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills

**Literacy and Essential Skills—
for LEARNING, WORK and LIFE**

Working with your Mentee

- Familiarize yourself with resources that could help your mentee achieve his/her learning goals (e.g. resources offered at the local community college, community organizations, in the workplace).
- It is important that you guide and assist the mentee to achieve his/her objectives. It is not, however, your job to solve a mentee’s problems or to complete work assignments for him/her.
- Constructive feedback is an important part of the mentoring relationship. Use statements such as:
 - “I have a few ideas that might help...”
 - “I liked the way you...”
 - “Have you ever considered...?”
 - “May I show you how I do it?”
- Provide feedback in a supportive way. If you do not feel comfortable with providing feedback, seek advice from other mentors.
- Do not hesitate to seek advice from other mentors when you need ideas or suggestions.
- Do not judge the mentee. It is your job to support and encourage them; respect is critical to the success of the mentoring relationship.

Notes:



How to be a Mentee

Mentoring can be a rewarding experience for the mentee. Some of the benefits include:

- Improved skills
- Increased self-confidence
- Increased motivation
- Increased job satisfaction
- Increased productivity

If you would like to be a mentee, look for opportunities to work with another employee to improve your skills. Once you have established a relationship with your mentor, it is up to you to make it work. The following guidelines can help you maintain a successful mentoring relationship.

Guidelines for Mentees

Preparing for Mentoring

- Think about what you want to accomplish through mentoring. What are your learning goals?
- Make sure you understand your roles and responsibilities as a mentee, as well as the responsibilities of the mentor (See *Mentoring Agreement Form*).
- Familiarize yourself with the essential skills required for jobs in your organization (see internal job descriptions or visit hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills to view a collection of Essential Skills Profiles).

Establishing the Mentoring Relationship

- Meet with your mentor to discuss your goals, expectations and interests. Be clear and specific about what you want to accomplish. If you have a learning plan, you may want to review this with him/her.
- Clarify and define the mentoring relationship. Make sure that you and the mentor have a common understanding of the following:
 - Confidentiality (e.g. what information will be kept confidential/what information can be shared)
 - The duration of the relationship
 - How often, where and how long you will meet
 - Preferences for receiving feedback, etc.
- You and your mentor may want to complete the *Mentoring Agreement Form* to clarify your learning goals, as well as mentor and mentee expectations and responsibilities.
- Talk about your preferred learning strategies (e.g. observation, reading, discussion) to determine the best way to achieve your learning goals.
- Identify strategies or activities that will support your learning goals. Activities could involve practising skills or tasks, trying new projects or assignments, job shadowing, self-study, etc.

Working with your Mentor

- Be enthusiastic and open to new learning opportunities.
- It is important that you work with the mentor to achieve your learning objectives. It is not, however, the mentor's job to solve your problems or to complete work assignments for you. You must take responsibility for your own work.
- Constructive feedback is an important part of the mentoring relationship. Be open to constructive criticism and try to learn from it. You should also provide feedback to your mentor on the mentoring relationship to help ensure it is successful.
- Do not judge or criticize the mentor. Respect is critical to the success of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring Activities

The following activities are simple and practical ways to improve essential skills through mentoring. They are suggestions and can be tailored to meet the specific needs and goals of the mentee.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS	ACTIVITIES
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for the mentee’s opinion about an article in a company publication (e.g. newsletter). • Review workplace memos together. Ask the mentee to identify words or acronyms he/she does not understand and discuss them.
Document Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss important workplace documents together (e.g. WHMIS, fire procedures). • Provide guidance on how to complete commonly used workplace forms (e.g. timesheets, schedules).
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the mentee to practise writing memos or emails to co-workers and managers. Review together and provide feedback. • Suggest learning resources that can help with writing skills development (e.g. workbooks, training sessions).
Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how numeracy is relevant to the mentee’s work tasks (e.g. scheduling, estimating the amount of time a task will take to complete). • Ask the mentee to prepare an agenda for a meeting, ensuring that enough time is allocated to each agenda item. Review together and provide feedback.
Oral Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate effective oral communication skills for the mentee (e.g. invite the mentee to attend a meeting that you are leading). • Encourage the mentee to participate in activities that will enhance his/her oral communication skills (e.g. leading staff meetings, speaking with a co-worker about a particular issue, handling customer complaints). Provide feedback.
Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss ways to improve the company’s operations or policies. Encourage the mentee to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed ideas. • Ask the mentee to talk about a problem he/she is facing in the workplace. Talk about possible solutions and the strengths and weaknesses of each.
Working with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the mentee to participate in group activities (e.g. volunteering, working groups). • Watch and listen to how the mentee interacts with others. Provide feedback.
Computer Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest learning opportunities to improve computer use skills (e.g. training sessions). • Help the mentee search the Internet for information relevant to the workplace or a particular task.
Continuous Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the mentee’s learning plan and assist with goal setting. • Talk about how the mentee learns best (e.g. on-the-job training, independent study). Encourage the mentee to take advantage of these learning opportunities.

Mentoring Agreement Form

Mentoring is when two employees—a mentor and mentee—work together to help the mentee improve his/her skills. The mentor acts as a role model and supports the mentee by sharing knowledge, resources and advice to help the mentee improve his/her skills.

The following agreement form can be completed by the mentor and mentee together. It can help to organize the mentoring relationship.

Mentor: _____

Mentee: _____

Mentee Learning Goals

I want to improve the following essential skills:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking (e.g. problem solving, decision making) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Document use | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy (Math) | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer use |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communication | |

Time Commitments

We will commit the following amount of time to the mentoring relationship:

- ___ day(s) per week for up to ___ weeks
- ___ ½ day(s) per week for up to ___ weeks
- ___ hour(s) per week for up to ___ weeks
- ___ lunch hour(s) for up to ___ weeks
- ___ hour(s) after work for up to ___ weeks

Responsibilities

Mentor: I agree that my responsibilities will include (check those that apply):

- Helping the mentee to identify clear learning objectives
- Providing information and constructive feedback (e.g. progress made, areas for improvement)
- Demonstrating effective essential skills
- Referring the mentee to appropriate learning resources
- Supporting, encouraging and motivating the mentee
- Scheduling meetings with the mentee
- Attending meetings with the mentee
- Maintaining mutual trust and respect
- Maintaining confidentiality

Other: _____

