

# How to choose a mentor

Relationships between a mentor and mentee are two-way streets, so it is helpful to know what you are looking for in a mentor to find someone who will be most beneficial for you. This worksheet will help you:

- Determine what your ideal mentor looks like
- Identify what you would like your mentoring relationship to look like
- Come up with questions to assess if someone is a good mentor
- Rank and compare potential mentors to find your best match

It is important to remember that mentoring relationships are meant to be flexible. It is totally normal for relationships to change over time and we want you to have complete control over starting, changing, and ending relationships to best meet your goals. We are here to help along the way, so feel free to reach out to anyone on the officer team and/or check out our other resources for more guidance

## Part 1: Identifying your deal mentor + mentoring relationship

To ensure that your mentoring needs are met, it is important to define what you are looking to gain from the mentoring experience. For example you might:

1. Learn about the day-to-day work of a scientist in a specific field
2. Get advice on applying to or attending college
3. Learn more about career opportunities in your field of interest
4. Learn about internship or work experience opportunities

Think about up to three things you want to get out of your mentoring relationship and write them below.

**Goal 1:**

**Goal 2:**

**Goal 3:**

Now that you know your goal(s), let's think about what type of mentor (or mentors) can help you reach them! For each item in the rubric, consider what you would like in your mentor and mentoring relationship and write it down in the empty column to the right. If you have other metrics you want to consider, write them in the bottom rows that say "other."

| Metric  | What I want: | Score |
|---|--------------|-------|
| <b>Mentor experience:</b> do you want a mentor who is just starting undergraduate school and therefore more familiar with the college application process, or someone already with a job or profession who can tell you about their career? |              |       |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Scientific match:</b> what scientific subject or specific career do you want to learn more about? Would you be ok with talking to someone with slightly broader interests For example, if you have questions about viruses, would talking to someone in any biology field be ok?</p> |  |  |
| <p><b>Communication availability:</b> how frequently do you want to speak to your mentor and for how long? For example, do you want to talk to someone weekly for the next few months or just every now and then for the next few years?</p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Communication type:</b> do you want to speak in real time over the phone or is emailing back and forth ok? How quickly do you want your mentor to get back to you?</p>   |  |  |
| <p><b>Personal identity:</b> do you want a mentor who is similar to you in some way? For example, someone with the same gender, who speaks the same languages other than English, is from a similar place or school, or has a similar learning difference or disability?</p>               |  |  |
| <p><b>Other</b></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Other</b></p>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Other</b></p>  |  |  |

Now let's figure out how important each of these metrics are to you. No mentor will ever be perfect, so it is likely that you won't be able to find someone who perfectly matches all the boxes in your rubric. Pay specific attention to how your goals shape how important each metric is. For example, if your primary

goal is to learn more about how to apply to college you might care a lot about finding someone still in undergraduate school who is able to communicate with you more frequently as you apply to college.

1. Identify the three metrics that are most important to you and write down “1” in the score column
2. Are there any metrics that aren’t important to you at all? Write a “4” in the score column
3. Consider the remaining metrics:
  - a. If the metric is important to you, write a “2” in the score column
  - b. If the metric would be nice to have, but isn’t a deal breaker, write a “3” in the score column.
4. Reflect on your rubric. Your 1’s are your “must-haves”: you might find it difficult to find long-term satisfaction in a mentoring relationship that doesn’t check these boxes. Your 2’s and 3’s are “ideals”: consider how you might compromise on some of these metrics or consider having a second or even third mentoring relationship to make up for any shortcomings.

A few things to think about and/or discuss with others:

- How hard was it to pick only three must-haves?
- Looking at your goals, why were your must-haves so important to you? How do they compare to the must-haves of your peers who have similar or different goals?
- How important are the remaining categories to you? If given the choice, where would *you* draw the distinction between “must haves” and “ideals”?
- How would you envision compromising on some of your “ideals”?

## Part 2: Making a list of potential mentors

Now that you know what you are looking for in a mentor, it is time to find mentors who seem like good choices to you!

1. Write your “must haves” in the top three rows under “metric”. Include your “2” and “3” scored metrics below those.
2. Look through our mentor database to begin to identify mentors that match your must haves. As you identify a potential mentor, write their name in the right columns of the table and begin to fill in the information you find out in each mentor profile.
  - a. Keep in mind that you will need to send an initial email to mentors to get some information, such as how frequently they can communicate with you and how you can communicate. See our next resource sheet for advice on sending an email to a potential mentor!
  - b. Make sure you identify at least three mentors. Not everyone you reach out to will be available and it is also possible a mentor who looks great on paper doesn’t match well with you as a mentor in practice. If this happens, you can always return to your list and set up a new relationship!

|                 |               | <b>Potential Mentor Names</b> |  |  |  |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
|                 | <b>Metric</b> |                               |  |  |  |
| 3 “must haves”: |               |                               |  |  |  |
|                 |               |                               |  |  |  |

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|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                         |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other important metrics |  |  |  |  |  |
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|                         |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         |  |  |  |  |  |
|                         |  |  |  |  |  |

3. We recommend you reach out to mentors who best match your metrics in this worksheet, but remember that no mentor will be perfect. The only way to learn exactly what is most important to you in a mentoring relationship is to start trying out different relationships. It is completely ok and not uncommon that a match that looks great on paper doesn't work out as well in practice. If this happens, we encourage you to return to this worksheet to reassess your values with the new things you've learned and to find another mentor. If you're ever stuck or feeling discouraged, don't forget to reach out to our officer team for help.

### Getting help

Forming a mentoring relationship is not always easy. If you are having any problems, please reach out to us by directly contacting a member of our team below or emailing us at [contact@symbioticstem.org](mailto:contact@symbioticstem.org).