

## *Maintain a Relationship – A Mentee’s Guide*

### **GUIDELINES**

Sometimes there can be a lull in a professional relationship after the initial ‘get to know each other’ questions. Check out the conversation starters and questions for possible topics for your emails.

Often, it can be as simple as starting your email each week with a summary of how your week went. If you encountered any struggles, or succeeded in fulfilling any of your goals, or even sharing your accomplishments can ignite conversations and even prompt questions from your mentor. Feel free to share commonalities that are experienced by all Tech students, like having a class in the same building or with the same professor as your mentor. You can also talk about some of our current classes and whether your mentor had to take similar ones and if they use the information learned in their job.

Be sure to do some research before you start your initial emails to your mentor. Asking questions you could have easily found answers to elsewhere will be a waste of time for both of you and is unlikely to make a good impression. Avoid letting your emails become a survey in which your mentor simply answers the questions as their response. In learning the answers to these questions through the medium of conversation you will gain a much better understanding of their position and the field of work you are looking into.

You can check out their LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) or other professional profile before you meet them, and then ask them to elaborate on the basics through the medium of conversation.

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## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

These questions are grouped according to different career values.

### **1. ACHIEVEMENT**

- What gives you a sense of accomplishment in this occupation?
- What kinds of things do you find challenging about your job?

### **2. ASSOCIATES**

- How much of your job involves interaction with coworkers? the public?
- Is there a team approach to your work?
- What kind of people do you help?

### **3. CREATIVE**

- Do you get to express individuality in your work, or do you have to follow strict guidelines?
- Do you have leeway in your job to be creative and imaginative in what you do?

### **4. ENVIRONMENT**

- What kind of conditions do you work in- noisy, quiet, crowded, city, rural?
- What is the work atmosphere like?
- Do you have the chance to relocate? Where could you go?
- Do you want to go somewhere different?

### **5. ETHICAL**

- Under what circumstances can you refuse to do something not in tune with your ethical beliefs?

### **6. FINANCIAL BENEFITS**

- What is the possible salary range for someone in this occupation?
- Do you receive benefits (company car, dental plan, etc.)?
- What is an average starting salary for this occupation?
- Are there incentives for upgrading or taking extra courses to improve your education? (e.g. salary increase)
- Are you paid for your overtime hours?

### **7. INDEPENDENCE**

- How much time do you spend working alone?
- Do you have complete control over how you do things?

### **8. INTELLECTUAL**

- What do you find most challenging about your job?
- What kinds of opportunities for advancement are there? Is there a cap on your position for advancement?

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- How much learning and research do you do? Is there a lot of problem solving? What type?
- Does your occupation take full advantage of your capabilities and education?

### **9. LIFESTYLE**

- Do you have weekends off?
- Do you have set hours or do they vary?
- Do you get time off? How much holiday/vacation time do you have?
- Do you move around a lot? Is there the possibility of being transferred?
- Are you on-call very often?
- Approximately how many hours do you work in an average week?
- How much flexibility are you allowed in your job in terms of dress, hours, vacation, or job location?

### **10. MANAGEMENT**

- Do you supervise others?
- Do you evaluate others in terms of performance?

### **11. SECURITY**

- How is the job market in your field?
- How stable is this job?
- What is the future demand in this occupation?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in this field?
- How long do employees stay with this organization? Why do they typically leave?

### **12. SOCIAL RECOGNITION**

- Do you feel respected as a result of the work you do?
- How is your achievement recognized?
- Is your job performance reviewed on a regular basis? How?
- What social obligations go along with your job?
- Is there a lot of public exposure?

### **13. SOCIAL SERVICE**

- Does your work bring about social change?
- Do you help others in society?
- Does the community benefit from your work?

### **14. VARIETY**

- Do you do the same thing every day?
- What is the most exciting thing about your job?
- Do you travel very often?
- Do you have to complete one project before starting another?

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### **GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR**

- What kinds of things did you do before entering this occupation? Which were most helpful?
- What do you look for or find most impressive in potential employees?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- Are there any professional journals/ career-related literature/ organizations that would help me to learn about this field?
- How much do employers value internships? Volunteer work? Summer jobs? Unrelated work experience?
- How do people find out about job openings? Are they advertised? If so, where?
- What coursework have you found most helpful?
- How can I get experience in this field while I am still in school?
- How is a typical job interview in this industry conducted?
- If you could go back in time, would you do anything differently in your preparations for this occupation?
- What is the typical entry-level position(s) for this job?
- How important is it to have the right degree or courses to have a chance to develop a career like yours today? What are other qualifications that you as an employer/employee consider important?
- Can you suggest work/volunteer experiences that would be advantageous to have?
- How did you get your present job?
- What are some of the dos and don’ts in trying to develop a successful career in your field?
- What type of personality do you think is best suited for this career?

### **PROS AND CONS**

- Would you choose the same occupation if you could do it all over again; why or why not?
- Do you have any special words of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
- If you could change any aspects of your career, what would you change?
- Why did you enter this occupation? Was it all that you had expected it to be? Was it better or worse?
- What is your favorite thing about this occupation?
- What are some of the major stresses in your work? Do you consider this to be a low/ medium/ high stress job?

### **JOB DUTIES**

- Could you outline your primary job responsibilities and indicate the percentage of time that you devote to each?
- Is there such a thing as a typical week in your job and could you briefly describe it?
- Are there any duties that you perform on a regular basis? What are they?

### **OTHER QUESTIONS**

- What other occupations can you get into with the same background?

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- If you had to choose another related occupation, what would it be?
- Are there any other occupations that you would suggest for me to explore as an alternative to this one?
- Can you recommend any other individuals, within or outside this organization who are involved in similar or related positions that I could talk to for more information?
- Are females in this occupation viewed differently than males?
- Are there any experiences that you have had (work-related or otherwise) that have helped you in your occupation?
- How did you end up on your career path or in your current job?
- What level of education do you think would best prepare me for a career in this field?
- What skills are necessary to be successful in this field?
- Are you working on any new projects? Tell me about your involvement.

### **What you can offer**

You also might be able to [offer information from your perspective](#) to your mentor, for instance about technology, or new courses, programs or trends that are related to the career field.

Sample questions courtesy of the University of Manitoba, Student Counseling and Career Center: Career Mentor Program, Sample Questions,  
[http://umanitoba.ca/student/counselling/mentor/sample\\_questions.html](http://umanitoba.ca/student/counselling/mentor/sample_questions.html)