

# Mentoring Expectations

## The Mentor

The mentor is the person who is providing leadership and support for a younger or less experienced member. Your job isn't to replace the role of the 4-H advisors in your club, but instead to provide a viewpoint from your own experience.

### Responsibilities of a Mentor:

- **Be Available** – Mentoring is a time commitment so be sure to make some time in your schedule to text, talk on the phone or meet in person. Provide a good way for them to contact you if they have questions.
- **You Go First**– Sometimes it can be a little awkward getting to know a new person. It is your job as a mentor to make the first move towards friendship. You can do this by sharing some information about yourself and asking them some easy questions about themselves.
- **Reach Out at Key Times** – At the beginning of a mentoring relationship, you should reach out regularly to check-in with your mentee. You can use key times in the 4-H year or schedule to time your contact. For example, shortly after project books are distributed, consider checking in to see if they got their books and if they've had a chance to look them over. Or, a couple of weeks before judging, you may want to see if they have any questions about their project or what to expect.

## The Mentee

The mentee is the person who is receiving support from an older or more experienced member. Having a mentor is a gift and an opportunity. Get the most out of mentoring by doing your part.

### Responsibilities of a Mentor:

- **Be Present** – The time you invest will be worth it in the end. Respect the time your mentor is giving by being on time, limiting distractions (staying off your phone) and participating in the conversation.
- **Reach Out as Needed** – If you have questions, look through your project or club information first. Then, if you cannot find the answer or do not understand the materials, reach out to your mentor using the contact information they provided. They will check in with you a few times, but you do not need to wait for them.
- **Appreciate** – Be sure to thank your mentor for providing help and support throughout your 4-H year or project.



# Mentoring Guidelines

## Choosing a Mentor

Mentoring can be a great way to support new or younger members in your 4-H club, but choosing the right mentor is essential and can be a little tricky. Over time, youth may find their own informal mentors as they get to know other members in your club.

However, choosing a mentor for them can help to fill in that gap as they get to know others.

- Mentors should be responsible and reliable. This relationship won't benefit either person if the mentor doesn't show up, is late, or usually misses deadlines or does poor quality work themselves.
- Mentors should be friendly and welcoming, so the mentee feels comfortable asking questions.
- Communicate with them ahead of time and review the expectations of the role to ensure they are willing and able to commit some time to helping another member.
- Sometimes it helps to pair members with the same or similar projects. For example, if you have a member taking sheep for the first time, having a member experienced with the sheep project may be a great benefit to them.
- Other times it may make more sense to choose a mentor who goes to the same school or has another connection.

## Rule of Three

Ohio 4-H encourages all interactions to happen in groups of three or more. In a mentoring situation, this can be difficult because mentoring is often a two-person relationship.

- You can consider pairing youth in larger groups, such as one mentor with two or more mentees. However, take care not to overwhelm your youth mentor as this may be the first time they've taken on a role like this.
- A parent or volunteer should remain nearby during face-to-face meetings. This person does not need to be part of the conversation but should be able to hear the conversation.
- Parents should monitor one-on-one digital conversation occasionally to ensure conversation topics remains positive and appropriate.
- Over time if youth develop a genuine friendship, they may be meeting on their own outside of the bounds of the formal mentoring agreement that is okay. As always, we encourage parents to monitor their children's relationships in an age-appropriate way.