

SELF-GUIDED MENTORSHIP FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



GROWING FUTURE FOREST AND
CONSERVATION LEADERS



XV WORLD
FORESTRY CONGRESS

THE GUIDE WILL COVER THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

1. Introducing yourself
2. Reaching out
3. Securing a mentor
4. Tips for being a good mentee
5. Applying for programs

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Project Learning Tree Canada (PLT Canada)/World Forestry Congress (WFC) Guide to finding a green mentor. Whether it's your first time being a mentee, or you have mentorship experience, this guide will help you get started and be successful in your mentorship journey.

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship is a relationship between a mentor and a mentee. A mentor's role is to listen, offer support, and share relevant knowledge and experiences. They challenge their mentee and model soft skills. Mentees take responsibility for the direction and preparation of meetings, and develop objectives for their mentorship journey. A mentee challenges themselves to think about who they are and where they are going, and ask and implement feedback.

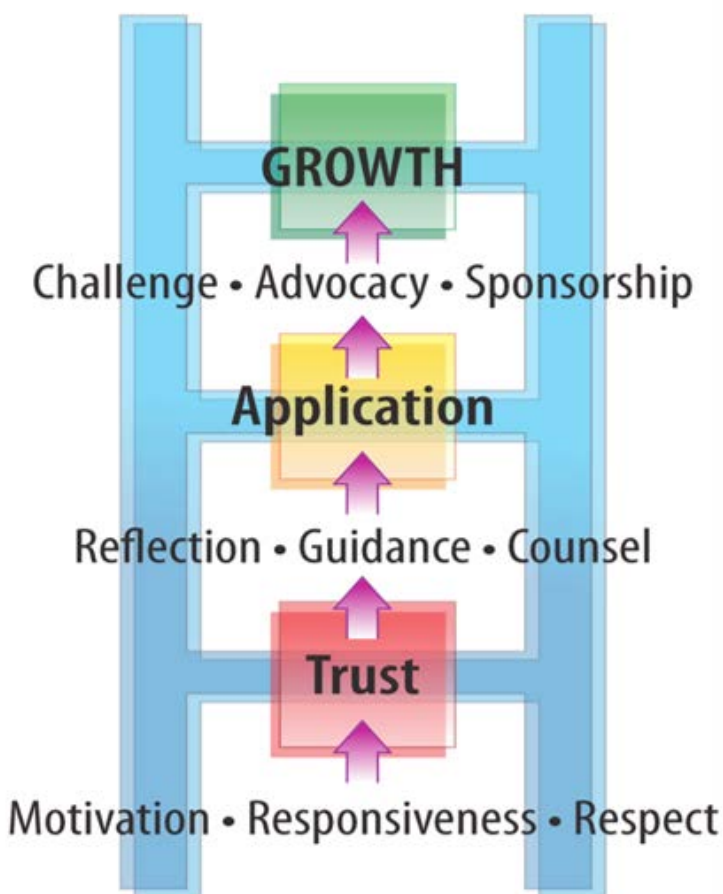
In a mentorship relationship, you are guided by someone with more professional experience in a specific sector. Mentors and mentees work together to advance the mentee's professional goals, and discuss topics like career advancement, networking, professional development, communication, and more.

Over time, both mentors and mentees grow. Mentees gain insights into the sector and plan their career pathway as they enter the workforce or a new field. Mentors learn new perspectives, improve their leadership skills, and grow their networks.



WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is someone who has professional experience in a field or organization that a mentee wants to learn more about. Mentors support a mentee by listening, providing constructive feedback, and using their personal experience to advise their mentee in their career development. Mentors should act as caring and positive role models and demonstrate leadership and strong communication skills. Mentors often showcase soft skills, such as work-life balance, critical thinking, communication, problem solving, and personal wellness.



WHY IS MENTORSHIP IMPORTANT?

Mentorship is important because it promotes leadership development and supports both good employment practices and effective employee behaviours within the forest and conservation sector. It helps increase access to resources and creates a supportive community that will enhance young adults' career pathway development. Everyone can benefit from mentorship and giving back to their community.



1. INTRODUCING YOURSELF

Having a strong resume can be helpful when you are introducing yourself to potential mentors so they can learn more about you and understand how they can best support you based on your previous experience.

A resume is a document that lists your professional and academic qualifications. There are many great professional resume formats and templates, but one of the most common types is a chronological format. You can see an example of a chronological resume on the next page.

Other types of resumes include Functional and Combination Resumes (templates on the next page). Use a Functional Resume to highlight your skills over your work history. This resume is often used by early professionals with less than 3 years of experience, or when pivoting careers or industries. A Combination Resume lists skills and qualifications first, followed by work history. Combination Resumes are best suited for early professionals or recent graduates still growing their professional experience. It's best to use a Combination Resume when you have no gaps in your professional history, and have had consistent work experience.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME FORMAT STARTS WITH:

1. Name and contact information (make sure this information is not formatted in a table or graphic)
2. A professional summary or a strong objective.

Some key tips:

- Be specific- the summary of objective should be 1-2 sentences long.
- Use keywords from the job posting.
- Include what value you can add to the company/organization. For example, different languages you speak, years of experience, education background, etc.

Example of a summary: A recent college graduate seeking a career in the forest sector that utilizes my strong interpersonal, math, and research skills.

3. Work/volunteer experience
4. Education
5. Certifications or trainings

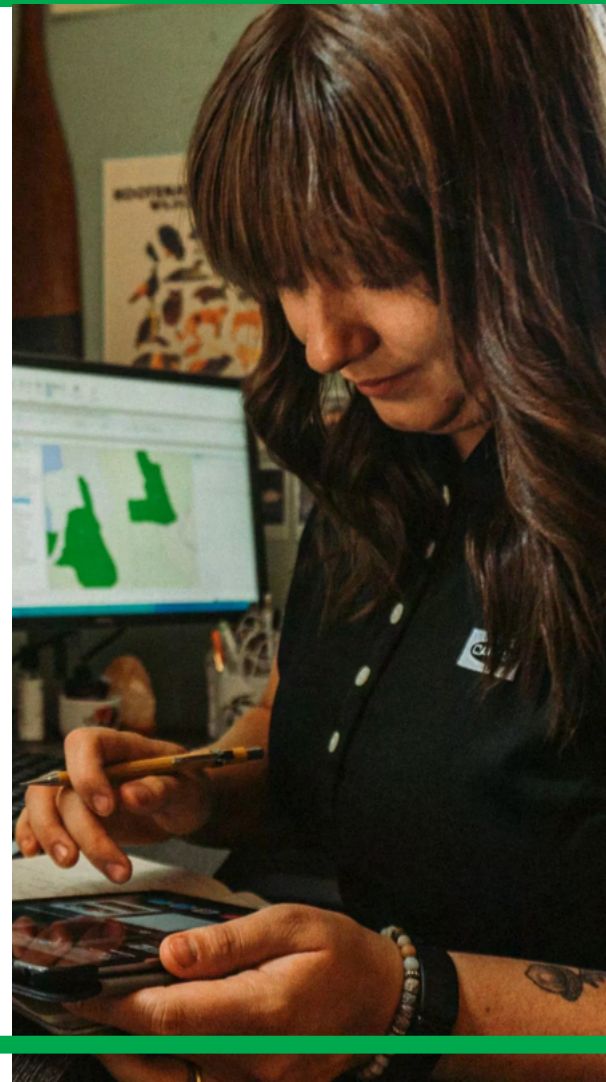
Although they may make your resume visually stand out, **avoid using graphs, tables, charts, graphics, or fun fonts.**

Many companies use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), and its software will not be able to read your resume and will reject it, even if you are a great candidate.



TOP TIPS FOR CREATING YOUR RESUME

1. Keep your resume under two pages (one if you are applying for your first job).
2. Only include your LinkedIn account if it is up to date.
3. Include a professional email address: for example, yourname.lastname@gmail.com is clear and simple. You can also use your student email address.
4. Keep your resume simple and professional. Use fonts like Arial, Calibri, Georgia, or Times New Roman, and avoid using pictures, graphics, or tables unless you are sure the resume is being read by a human.
5. Use action verbs like led, handled, managed, or created to describe your roles and tasks. [Check out this list of action verbs for more examples!](#)
6. Use numbers when describing the results of your work. For example, wrote 15 blogs, assessed 10 blocks per week, grew social media followers by 10%, etc.
7. Write about relevant courses you have taken, practical experience you have gained through labs, etc.
8. Have professional references ready, but do not include them on your resume. Make sure your references have been notified in advance, however! Professional references should be teachers or supervisors that have observed your employable skills and experience in action.
9. Do not include personal information like your Social Insurance Number (SIN).
10. Ask others to proofread your resume to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [PLT Canada Combination Resume Template](#)
- [PLT Canada Functions Resume Template](#)
- [PLT Canada Resume Template](#)
- [PLT Canada Cover Letter Template](#)

YOUR NAME

City - Phone Number - Email - LinkedIn customized URL

SUMMARY

- Identify as few as 3 and as many as 7 reasons why you are a great fit for the job
- This section should be customized for each job you apply to - you can change the order of existing bullets, write new bullets, or even remove bullets that aren't relevant
- Use this opportunity to highlight your key knowledge, skills and abilities that are specifically asked for in the job ad.

EXAMPLE FOR A PARK RANGER JOB

Demonstrated goal orientation, mental toughness and physical fitness while exceeding daily targets as a tree planter.

WORK/VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

COMPANY 3, Location

Job Title

(MM/YYYY) - Present

- Your current or most recent position should be the first one on the list. Use the Job Posting to select keywords that apply to your experience and what the employer is looking for.

COMPANY 2, Location

Job Title

(MM/YY) - (MM/YYYY)

- Keep each work experience to 3-4 bullet points. Highlight your key accomplishments during the position.

COMPANY 1, Location

Job Title

(MM/YY) - (MM/YYYY)

- As you write about your experience, you can use the STAR method

EXAMPLE USE OF ACTION WORDS

Demonstrated expertise climbing, pruning, and removing trees for clients.
communicated ideas clearly using Power Point and Zoom.

EDUCATION

Degree, Graduation Year or expected Graduation Year (YYYY)

College Name, Location

Remember to include relevant school projects - there's a reason your teachers have you write those essays/reports and give those presentations!

CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

List your professional certifications. Make sure that they are valid and not expired. Review the Job Posting for specific certifications required.

Education and/or Certification and Training can go BEFORE Work and Volunteer Experience if you don't have much of those.

COMMON CERTIFICATIONS INCLUDE:

Standard First Aid, Driver's License, Moving water Canoe, Wilderness First Responder First Aid, CPR, Firearms License, Chainsaw Safety, etc.



2. REACHING OUT

WHAT ARE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS?

Informational interviews are informal conversations you have with a person whose career interests you. An informational interview is a great way to learn more about what the day-to-day aspects of a particular job look like and help you expand your network. Through these interviews, you may also find a mentor. Use the example questions below to build your own informational interview experiences.



REMEMBER

- Every person you interview will be different, so be sure to tailor the questions to their position so as to get the information that will be most useful to you.
- Have positive body language and use effective listening. This can be smiling, nodding, asking relevant questions, and showing your enthusiasm. Don't do things like crossing your arms, slouching in your chair, yawning overtly, etc. This is even important if you are connecting virtually!



HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Select 5-10 questions

DETAILS OF THEIR JOB

- Could you please describe a typical day for you? A typical week?
- What are some of the benefits of being in this line of work (or working at this organization)?
- What are some challenges you have encountered?
- What is the most inspiring part of your job?

CAREER PATHS AND ADVANCEMENT

- What type of person is most suitable for this type of work?
- What kind of entry-level jobs do you think are good training grounds for a person entering this field right now?

WORK ENVIRONMENT

- How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people you work with?
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
- Is most of your work accomplished in teams or individually?
- Does your workplace have any opportunities for entry-level professionals/students?

FOLLOWING UP

- Would there be someone else I should talk to about a career in this field? If so, may I use your name when I contact them?
- What is the best way to go about looking for work in this field?

Remember to thank the person you interviewed with a follow up email!

THANK YOU NOTE AFTER MEETING SOMEONE (TEMPLATE)

Dear [Mr./Ms.]

Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to give me the opportunity to learn about your job as a/an [include job title]. It gave me a greater understanding of a career in [insert field/job]. The information I received today was invaluable for gaining more knowledge about this career pathway.

I enjoyed learning about your job and what a typical day is like for you. I learned about [insert what you learned from the conversation]. I appreciate the advice that you provided about [share any advice that you received during the conversation].

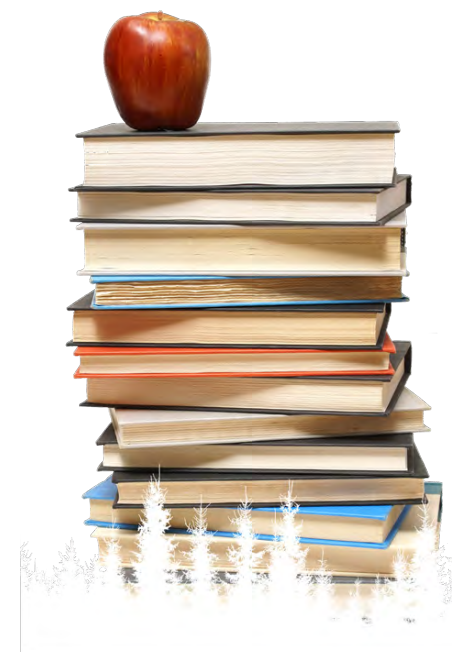
Thank you again for taking the time to speak with me and sharing your experience.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Contact information: University, Program, Graduation Year, Phone Number and Email]

[Resume or LinkedIn—only if it's updated]





3. SECURING A MENTOR

There are many ways to establish a mentorship relationship through email or in person. Before you get there, you will need to brainstorm ways to find someone who can mentor you.

TIPS TO FIND A MENTOR:

1. Brainstorm a list of potential contacts that can support you on your career pathway. These could be personal or professional supports. They may be people you already know or people you want to get to know.

Consider the following areas of your life to pull from:

- Classmates
 - Family
 - Friends and their families
 - Neighbours/community members
 - Coaches
 - Faculty/teachers/instructors
 - Coworkers
 - People working in your area of interest
 - People you meet at events
 - Your employer
 - Your student peers
2. Think about groups you might join that will help you meet new people and build your network, like Facebook groups or local volunteering opportunities.
 3. Once you have completed brainstorming, choose your top 10 contacts. For those people, include what support they might be able to offer (information about an organization, job interview support, public speaking tips, advice on navigating job boards, general encouragement, connections in an organization you are interested in, etc.) and their contact info (phone number and/or email).
 4. Select some of these people and invite them for a coffee or tea in person or virtually to discuss their work. This is called informational interviewing.

Once you have found a person that you have connected with and feel that their career aligns with what you are hoping to get out of mentorship, you can formally request their support.



HOW TO ASK FOR MENTORSHIP THROUGH EMAIL

Hello Ms., Mr.[Last Name],

It is a pleasure to connect with you again. I am [your name] and we met at [date and time].

Thank you again for sparing some of your valuable time to meet with me. I wanted to follow up on our last conversation, where we discussed [insert poignant information that you gained from the conversation]. I learned a lot, and it sparked my curiosity and made me excited about my future career prospects.

The conversation that we had was very insightful, and I would like to meet with you to discuss a potential mentoring relationship as I feel like there is a lot of great information I could learn from you. I am eager to learn more about [include what information you would like to gain].

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,[Your Name]

[Contact information: University, Program, Graduation Year, Phone Number, and Email]

[Resume or LinkedIn—only if it's updated]





HOW TO ASK FOR MENTORSHIP IN PERSON

Asking someone to be your mentor in person is very similar to asking someone through email. You can follow these steps to help you get there:

1. After maintaining a positive relationship with someone you interviewed, ask if they would like to meet you in person. Suggest a casual place to meet, like a coffee shop.
2. Show gratitude by thanking them for taking the time to meet you and for sharing their knowledge with you.
3. Make the ask by being clear with what you are hoping to gain, and what they can do for you. Note that it is a low time commitment, with only 2-3 hours per month. Remember that mentorship is beneficial for both parties, so also feel free to talk about what you hope to share with your potential mentor.
4. Give them time to answer. The person you asked does not need to give you an answer right away—they may need to check their schedule before committing.
5. Show your appreciation by thanking them if they agree (or not), and set up a time when you will both meet next.



4. TIPS FOR BEING A GOOD MENTEE

The fact that you are interested in finding a mentor and willing to do the hard work to assess, reflect, and improve your skills or education gaps shows your ability to take initiative. Taking initiative and being proactive are key parts of being a good mentee.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS AS A MENTEE

1. Figure out what you want to gain from the mentorship relationship, but be flexible to adapt as the relationship with your mentor evolves.
2. Do the work. Do the self reflection, do the career exploration, and ask the hard questions. You will have more success as a result.
3. Be open to new ideas and new experiences. Part of the reason you are doing mentorship is to broaden your world.
4. Be polite, respect your mentor's time, be prepared for meetings, and follow up when you say you will. Your mentor is busy and graciously sharing their knowledge and expertise. This will help to build strength and trust in your relationship.
5. Remember that mentorship is about personal and professional growth. Don't hesitate to share information about who you are, your interests, and what gets you excited at work and outside of work! The best relationships will form with trust and finding common ground.
6. Be true to you. Be your most authentic self and you are likely to get the feedback and information that will best serve you.
7. Don't be afraid to share and speak up. The beauty of mentorship is that learning isn't always one-way. You have valuable ideas, skills, and experiences that your mentor will benefit from hearing about.
8. Be mindful of how you communicate. Miscommunication can impact your relationships, so be as clear as possible and speak with kindness always.

TIPS TO HELP WITH DECISION MAKING

People make decisions based on their values and what is most important to them. The employment and education choices you make today could affect how you approach your future career. Improving your decision making process can help you with your future jobs, professional relationships, and communities



1. Identify what is important to you (for example, family, work, nature, art).
2. Gather information about different options. A simple Google search can go a long way, or you could ask someone you trust, like a mentor.
3. Consider possible end results or consequences.
4. Make your decision after weighing the information from steps 1–3.
5. Reflect on your decision.





TIPS TO HELP WITH SELF-REFLECTION

Self-reflection is critical for personal growth. Knowing how to identify your strengths and weaknesses and provide constructive self-feedback will help you see what you can improve and what you can use to help you in the professional world.

1. Reflect on past experiences.
2. Acknowledge where improvement may be needed.
3. Recognize that failure is part of learning. Don't be too hard on yourself!
4. Try looking at things from a new or different perspective.
5. Accept change if you decide to go in a different direction.



5. APPLYING FOR PROGRAMS

When you apply to a job, you are trying to put your best self forward. It's the same idea when you apply to any program, whether that be an educational program, a youth program, a mentorship program, a scholarship, or more. You can increase your chances of being accepted into a program by following these tips:

1. **Do your research:** Impress an organization by knowing their mission and vision statements. Attend info sessions or reach out to the program coordinators for additional background/information.
2. **Follow the instructions:** Fill out the required fields, have documents ready (like your updated resume or cover letter), and be aware of word limits.
3. **Prepare for interviews:** Come prepared with answers to some of the most common questions:
 - Tell me about yourself:
This question can be hard to answer! Break it down into three parts: the present, the past, and future. You can briefly mention who you are, what you are currently doing (work/education) and a recent accomplishment. Then talk about past work or achievements that are relevant to the position. Lastly, mention any goals that you have and how the job aligns with what you have to offer.
 - Why do you want to be part of the program?
 - How will the program support your goals?

Also come dressed professionally for the Zoom or in-person interview.

4. **Bring questions:** Have 1–2 questions ready for the interview. It shows that you are curious, willing to learn, and engaged. You can also follow up after an interview with an email to ask questions. Question examples:
 - What is the time commitment for the program?
 - What are the resources available for mentees that make it into the program?
 - What are some of the alumni of your program doing after the completion of the program?
5. **Act promptly:** Set up your interview call promptly. Avoid responding last minute, and if you can no longer make the scheduled call, let the interviewer know with a valid reason and another date to reschedule.
6. **You're accepted. Now what?** If you've been accepted, confirm your participation if there is a deadline to accept by. Otherwise, your spot may go to someone on the waitlist!
7. **Be polite, no matter the outcome:** Even if you have been waitlisted or rejected, be gracious about it. Positions may open up later on, and those spots might be given to someone who was professional and polite, rather than someone who reacted negatively. You can also call back the program coordinators to see why you were rejected and how to improve for the next application cycle.
8. **Keep trying and ask for help:** Every experience teaches us something. Learn from it by having an open mind and open heart. Listen if you are given feedback, and continue to apply to programs while keeping that feedback in mind.






pltcanada.org | greenjobs@pltcanada.org

Canada

1306 Wellington Street West
Suite 400
Ottawa, ON K1Y 3B2

Phone: 613-747-24541

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PLT is an initiative of SFI 



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