



Mentoring Topics

Introduction

Mentoring conversations need to have a topic that is shaped into a goal. The goal forms the agenda and focus of the conversation and is set by the mentee. Goals can be about a challenge to overcome, a problem to solve or something to achieve and can relate to work-based activities, relationships, development and progression or individual behaviours. Mentoring often builds self-awareness too.

Sometimes topics can come easily to mentees, or they can be identified by, for example, completing a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) exercise (see separate download) based on where the mentee is in their career/role, or by discussing challenges, problems or goals (including hopes and dreams) with the mentor.

Identifying new topics

However sometimes it may be harder to identify a topic. Rather than end the mentoring partnership or letting it fizzle out, it is good to make the best of the opportunity to work together. Below you will find some suggestions of some generic topics that could be shaped into a more specific personal mentee goal. In the suggestions below 'you' relates mainly to the mentee.

- **Thinking long term:** If you have been focusing on short term goals, try focusing on longer term goals and dreams, or vice versa
- **Preparing for the future:** Discuss where the industry is going – do a bit of research first. What skills will you need in the future? How can you prepare for the future?
- **Looking beyond our industry:** Discuss what the industry could learn from other unrelated industries e.g. sport, finance, engineering, education, conservation
- **Role-play:** Use mentoring to practice an activity that needs honing for example: pitching; presenting; networking; giving feedback; having a difficult conversation with a colleague
- **Using SWOT:** Complete a SWOT exercise and consider what you need to develop for your ideal next role or for your dream job. What can you do to improve or gain the experience and skills you need?
- **Revisiting successes:** Based on something that you have achieved, or are proud of, or that you consider to be a key success. Share: how you approached it; what skills you used; what you learned by doing it; how you over-came any challenges.
- **Reviewing together:** Watch a ScreenSkills masterclass and discuss it together. What did you learn? What surprised you? What did you find challenging? What more do you want to know – and how could you find out? How does this relate to you and your development?
- **Re-imagining work:** Have a book-club activity but focusing on film, TV, animation, games, VFX. Discuss and critique the piece of work. If you had been working on it, what would you have done differently? What skills would you have needed to be

able to work successfully on it? What would have been a challenge? How could you have overcome that challenge?

- **Working with a blank canvas:** Focus on your own craft or area of expertise. Think of a new project or piece of work and how you would approach it. What skills would you bring? What may challenge you? Then see what others have done in the past and how there are similarities which what you thought/planned and what you could learn from the way others dealt with that piece of work.
- **Dealing with difficult situations:** If you are in a situation that has been imposed on you e.g. down time, lockdown, redundancy, discuss what you are learning during what could be a difficult time. What skills could you develop? How could those skills be useful in a work situation?
- **Self-reflection:** If you are in a situation that has been imposed on you e.g. down time, lockdown, redundancy, discuss what the industry may be like when you return or at some stage in the far future. What will you tell people you did with this time? What is this time teaching you about yourself?
- **Get creative:** Make something creative, film a piece of your work on your mobile or other device, or make a short film/animation etc. Share the finished piece of work with your mentor. What did/n't work? What did you enjoy/struggle with? What did you learn? What could you do to improve it? How would it look in a different medium/platform?
- **Producing work together:** Do a project together during your mentoring meetings.
- **Cross-department work:** Discuss all the areas of craft and expertise that are needed to make the finished product of part of the screen industry. What do you know about other departments and crafts? How does your department or craft interact with others? What do you need from others to do your job well and what do others need from you? Complete a short piece of work which enables you to take on as many roles as possible to become more aware of the whole process. Idea – release/publication/broadcast. Discuss learnings with your mentor.
- **Other ScreenSkills opportunities:** Explore the videos on the ScreenSkills YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/CreativeskillsetOrg/videos> or browse through the ScreenSkills website www.screenskills.com. Each section of the website hosts a wealth of material: Opportunities, Resources, Careers, Education & Training, Industry, Insight and About. Find something to discuss from the wide variety of content (too much to list here but some examples include: masterclasses, eLearning modules, case studies, news stories, research. What does this mean to you? How does it relate to you and your craft?