

This worksheet will help guide you through the process of finding a mentor.

I have followed this process over the years and successfully developed relationships with skilled artists willing to share their knowledge.

Mentorship is a beautiful transformational tradition. If you are in your teens or early twenties, this is the best time to begin a mentorship.

Here's why.

Have you ever heard it said that young people are "time billionaires?"

Youth has the ultimate edge- time is on the side of the youngest among us. And time is the rarest of currencies. You won't ever get more, only less.

With that in mind, now is the best time to look around at the elders in your life and ask yourself, "Who could be my first mentor?"

Your youth has a charm for older people. You fill them with hope, and they want to invest in your future. They can live on in spirit through the knowledge they share with you. Older people love to see young people do well, and their hearts swell with pride to be a part of that success.

Thinking in this way, you can see how there could be someone in your town or city right now who would be thrilled with the idea of taking you on as an apprentice.

All they are waiting for is someone like you to show some interest.

Step 1: Curiosity

So, let's discuss how you can go about finding your mentor. The first step I would recommend is to become curious.

What does being curious look like? 🤔

Simply engage as many people as you can in polite conversation. Find out what they do for a living. When you become curious, you will be surprised by what you discover about the people around you!

Case study:

After working in my small town grocery store for almost a decade, I longed to gain an education, but I had young children and lived hours away from the closest college or university. I was growing restless and frustrated with the seeming limitations of my situation in life. Then, one day, things changed as I adopted an attitude of curiosity. It happened like this. I fell into conversation with the quietest man in my department. I guessed his age to be around fifty and I imagined he must have an interesting life story after living half a century. That was enough to pique my curiosity.

And he did have an interesting story! He told me that for many years, he and his wife worked in classical 2D animation, mainly in television, on shows like 'Tom and Jerry.' However, they were both laid off when 3D animation became all the rage. After this, they moved to my tiny island and started a family, content to do whatever regular jobs they could find to provide for their sons. This man later introduced me to his wife. She and I got along well. On one occasion she showed me how to paint seasonal window displays on glass. Later on, she mentored me through a challenging mural project.

Curiosity led me to my next teacher, allowing me to learn and expand my professional network. I have other examples like this that are just as surprisingly fruitful. When hunting for a mentor, curiosity will prove to be one of the most valuable assets.

Curiosity continued:

Along with your budding curiosity, know this- you were born at a fortunate time. Here's why. North America has an aging population and, as a result, a looming labour gap. Society's skill shortage can work in your favour 😬


Putting aside the obvious tradespeople such as plumbers, welders and electricians, other rare trades will be sorely missed as the older generation heads into retirement.

There are likely older folks in your community who have had or still practice in specialized creative careers. They have yet to consider training anyone themselves and may not realize that a young person would be interested in learning with them. If mentorship were introduced to them, they might see it as an opportunity to leave a legacy and pass on their life's passion to the next generation.

So, who are these aging skilled artisans, and where can you find them in your community?

Here's how.

Step 2: Brainstorm

We are going to make a list 

I have some suggestions below so you can start growing your list.

Take a moment and consider. Who do you know, or who among your family and friends may know someone who works in one of these creative industries?

1. **Potter**
2. **Florist**
3. **Exhibition design/ fabrication (creating museum installations)**
4. **Concept design for architectural and landscape works**
5. **Freelance illustrator**
6. **Photographer for products, people or landscapes (think wedding photographer)**
7. **Freelance writer**
8. **Portrait painter**
9. **Window dresser (window displays for retail)**
10. **Freelance calligrapher**
11. **Pinstriper for marine or automotive vehicles**
12. **Fine artwork framer**
13. **Woodturner**
14. **Engraver**
15. **Sign maker**
16. **Cobbler (shoe designer or mender)**
17. **Dressmaker**
18. **Seamstress**
19. **Upholsterer**
20. **Design**
21. **Animation**
22. **Special effects**
23. **Practical effects**

Share this list with a few close friends and see what other creative jobs they may add to this list.

Step 3: Verifying a mentor

Keep an open mind while considering what apprenticeships might be available in your area. Also, put aside any ideas of a glamorous career for now. If fortune and fame come, it will be after you have developed skills and made professional connections. Right now, you are just beginning to build skills and associations.

Your apprenticeship, even if seemingly unrelated to your dream career, will likely introduce you to possible paths you never even thought of before, and that's part of the adventure.

Looking at the list of creative tradespeople above, do some research and see who you know or who could introduce you to someone who works in one of these professions.

List all of the artists you know working in these creative fields. Under each name and profession, write down anything you can find out about each of them.

Example:

Tod Stock

Upholsterer. Fifteen years in the industry. He owns his shop and specializes in antique furniture. Prior to opening his shop he offered services as an antique appraiser. He studied set design in the 1980s and has been married the past thirty years with 2 adult children.

Take the time to get to know the artist's backgrounds. Look them up online and read any articles or publications about their careers. Find out as much as you can about their profession in general. This in-depth study will pay off later and make a positive impression.

I suggest seeing what you can find out about their personal lives too, not in a toxic gossipy way but in a way that informs you in advance. Confirm on your end whether you will be a suitable fit. The artist you have zeroed in on may be battling a severe illness, have a sleep disorder or any

number of personal struggles that would make it very challenging for them to share their time and space with you.

After you made your second list detailing the individual artisans you know and their careers. Share this list again with someone close and supportive who you trust and go over the options together.

If you are considering apprenticing with someone, having another person's opinion on the match's compatibility may be helpful.

Step 4: Make an introduction

Now that you have gathered all that helpful information on your prospective mentor...it's time to meet them!

It may be that you never come across this person in your daily life, and they are outside your social circle- in such a case, you will need an advocate. This advocate may be a friend, family member or coworker who can make the introduction and vouch (speak positively and recommend) you to the mentor.

You and your advocate may have to explore how best to make the introduction. But once the introduction has been made, then what?

Build a relationship before you ask the big question:

One question you should never ask when you first meet a potential mentor is, “Will you mentor me?”

Think of it this way. You would never ask someone to marry you on the first date 😊 And the same goes with mentorship. If you ask right away before building trust and developing a relationship, you will likely make a wrong first impression. You may sound like you do not value their time or that you are impulsive and perhaps even self-serving or greedy, which you are not! You are enthusiastic, which is beautiful. Nevertheless, such a big question on the first date will be off-putting.

It takes time to build meaningful relationships. Mentorship is an extraordinary relationship. You ask someone to take time away from their family, work, friends and hobbies and spend that time teaching you instead.

Many people are motivated by a desire to help and to lead. The older generation is no exception to this rule, and there is a good chance that many talented people you know have a secret longing to pass on their knowledge to change a young person's life for the better. But first, you have to earn their trust before they will share it with you.

Getting started with this relationship can take many forms- you must search for opportunities.

Remember to be curious. Take notice of habits; are they a coffee drinker? Bring them a coffee. Find out what interests you have in common. Make conversation and show interest in their endeavours by asking thoughtful questions. If they could use help with anything you can do well, offer help; this could be as simple as cleaning up or running errands.

Or are you skilled in other areas that they are not? Maybe you can offer website design, photography or social media services if that's your thing. Show an interest in them and demonstrate your willingness to be caring and helpful. By doing so you are also showing them you understand the value of their limited time.

After you have developed a relationship, I suggest you propose this big question as an idea.

For example, you could say, "Hey, have you ever mentored anyone or had the chance to pass on your knowledge?" Or, "I would love to learn how to do what you do. Could you see yourself mentoring? I wonder what that would look like."

They will let you know if they find that idea worth pursuing.

But be prepared for some difficulties at this point in the conversation. They may like the idea but need help seeing how they could make it work. Don't worry, though; this is good. They want to discuss the difficulties, which means they are at least interested in having the conversation.

Still, be careful to attend to the doubts they have. They may have a very full schedule or financial issues, for example. See if you can save them money or time to help lighten their burden so they can share their skills with you.

It is also possible that the person you have selected as a mentor will be more than happy to teach you without any reservations. They may just feel flattered and thrilled at the idea. Mentoring is rewarding in and of itself.

Just think...one day, you will be able to mentor the next generation too. Isn't that wonderful 😊

You are ready to begin:

To put into practice, all we have covered in this worksheet may at first feel forced and unnatural. In time, these skills will become second nature as you apply them to everyday interactions with people. After all, your next mentor may be sitting right next to you.

Now you have a roadmap- a plan to find your first mentorship. If this exercise fits well into your worldview, follow these steps as best you can in your hometown. Practice being curious.

Consult friends and family, make lists of the artists you know, ask for introductions and begin to grow a professional relationship with your mentor.

Remember, you are the future, and we want to invest in you! Good luck 🍀

Let me know how you get on in your search for a mentor.