

# Factsheets for Mentors

## Getting to Know Your Mentee

This fact sheet will provide information, games, activities and questions you can ask your mentee to break the ice and get the conversation going.



## Introduction to Getting to Know Your Mentee

Activities can form the basis for developing and maintaining a trusting and caring relationship between mentors and mentees. Before you meet with your mentee it is a good idea to do some preparation.

You will then have some ideas ready to use so you are not trying to think of what to do on the spot. Make a list of some games you think you could play, some questions you can ask and other things you can do together.

When you do meet, make sure that you ask your Mentee what they would like to do. They may have lots of ideas and it also helps establish your relationship by giving them some control (see FACT SHEET – Building Relationships).

By allowing the young person to lead the relationship, they will feel less threatened and will more likely open up. However, for many mentees, it may take a while before they have the confidence to lead, but they need to have regular opportunities.

# What Games can you Play Together?

- If you are meeting in a group, it is lots of fun to play some ball games or balloon games. Balloon games can be excellent, as they do not require high skill levels that may exclude your mentee. They also make you laugh a lot and laughing is the best way of breaking the ice! The mentees get to have fun and see adults having fun, a great start to any relationship.

An example of a balloon game is to blow up a few balloons and in groups of four to six, hold hands and keep the balloon up in the air for 21 hits. Since you are holding hands you cannot use your hands but have to use head, nose, shoulders and elbows and feet. If that becomes too easy you can use two balloons, and even three at a time. For more game ideas see the websites listed in the references.

- An activity that will help get to know each other, and may be good for those mentees who don't like games, is to fill Potential Mentee and Mentor Interest forms.

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This is a good way to just get started and will generate lots of conversation and then lead on to games and activities that you both like. For instance, if you find that you both like cooking you can then discuss what types of food you like and even chefs, TV cooking programs and so on. This could then lead to an activity where you could potentially use some community facilities (school, church, community hall) to cook some food for those in your community that may need some extra support.

**You can find some great examples of games at:  
[www.youthmentoring.org.au/training.html#resources](http://www.youthmentoring.org.au/training.html#resources)**



# Activities

## You Can Do

Having something to do will always give you something to talk about, and while you and your mentee are doing these activities, you will find your mentee will be more willing to talk about a whole range of other things. You might find that you can drive somewhere together and, while driving, you may have really good conversations.

Apparently it is the lack of eye contact that is perfect for teenagers! If you can't drive somewhere, you might be able to catch public transport, which is a skill in itself! Just about anything you do together can potentially provide the opportunity to learn something that can be of benefit to both of you and will lead to other things. You can find some ideas for activities, one for each week of the year at: [www.volunteernc.org/code/mentyear.htm](http://www.volunteernc.org/code/mentyear.htm)

Some examples include:

- Making popcorn
- [Going to a movie or concert](#)
- Shooting hoops or kicking the football
- [Going to the library](#)
- Visiting some second hand shops



# Questions

## You Can Ask

Try not to ask too many questions at once and try to be aware of how your young person is feeling. Watch how they respond and this will indicate to you if you are asking too much too soon. Sometimes getting a conversation to flow can be very much about timing or just starting with the right topic.

The following reference was developed for online communication but the topics can be used just as well in face-to-face mentoring. Things to talk about can be found at [www.serviceleader.org/old/vv/direct/ideas.html](http://www.serviceleader.org/old/vv/direct/ideas.html) and include:

- Talking about your pets and other animals
- [What kind of music you like](#)
- Favourite computer games and software and internet sites
- [Positive stories about your family](#)
- Examples of conflict you have dealt with in your life and how you managed
- [Your school experience](#)

More information for MENTORS can be found on the **AUSTRALIAN YOUTH MENTORING NETWORK** Website under the Information for Mentors page [youthmentoring.org.au/info-for-mentors.html](http://youthmentoring.org.au/info-for-mentors.html)



The most important aspect of getting to know your mentee is allowing the relationship to happen, not forcing it or expecting instant success. Nobody gets it perfect all of the time. If you think you have said something you wished you hadn't, then tell them! They will appreciate your honesty and the ability to admit that you were wrong.

# Remember:

They will also appreciate if you admit to them how you are feeling as a mentor. They can be very nervous about meeting you and think that because you are an adult, you won't feel the same. Your willingness to be open and honest about what you really feel will give them the permission to do the same.



## References & Further Information

- **MENTOR:**  
[www.mentoring.org/start\\_a\\_program/operations/activities](http://www.mentoring.org/start_a_program/operations/activities)
- **Jobs 4 Youth Work—Ice breakers**  
[www.jobs4youthwork.co.uk/rsc/icebreakers.htm](http://www.jobs4youthwork.co.uk/rsc/icebreakers.htm)
- **Ultimate Camp Resource—Ice breakers**  
[www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/ice-breakers.html](http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/ice-breakers.html)
- **Australian Youth Mentoring Network**  
[www.youthmentoring.org.au](http://www.youthmentoring.org.au)

