

Advice from Mentors

Mentoring with Hugo is different from mentoring undergraduate or graduate students. We've asked veteran Hugo mentors to share their recommendations for first-time Hugo mentors. This tip sheet is our compilation of their advice, in their own words.

On Planning:

"I think it is really important to see what the student is excited by early on, and cater the experience to this."

"Spend time going "meta" i.e. encouraging your mentee to reflect on how they learn best or what their best learning experiences have been like (the latter is easier than asking them to think abstractly about their learning styles). Incorporate that information into the design of your time together."

"Be flexible with the deliverable—as you develop a greater understanding of the student's capabilities and they show their interest, modifying the final project to something that hits both should be the goal."

"Set clear expectations about what you can and can't cover in advance."

On Interacting During Meetings:

"Build rapport with your mentee (e.g. get to know their interests outside academics, dreams, hobbies) before jumping into the academic mentoring portion."

"Ask about fears, challenges, or areas of desired growth so that you can hone in on providing experiences that will be confidence-inspiring. Not all students will be able to produce these reflections, but worth getting them thinking about their own learning as an end unto itself."

"Listening and encouraging questions from the mentee in order to respond and tailor discussion to where they are and their evolving interests."

"Begin with a positive and supportive approach to the mentorship. This sets up a collaborative atmosphere that can be sustained throughout the mentorship."



“Provide original content and resources from your expertise. The students preferred reading my articles and watching my video interviews on subjects they are interested in.”

“Use examples/comparisons/benchmarks for the students. I used alumni from my university who I have worked with and profiled their similarities to the Hugo students. I believe it humanizes my approach to educating them as they can see the fruits of their labor.”

On Keeping Things On Track:

“Make sure the project is focused and doable within the timeframe. Stay on top of the milestones established in the mentorship plan, and communicate honestly if you cannot meet them.”

“Meet as frequently as possible in order to sustain the continuity.”

“Build a Google Doc or other shared running notes doc that you both can access to keep track of tasks and ideas and share responsibility for populating it. This helps develop their executive function and can be a good means of keeping track of ideas that come up during sessions but might be forgotten between sessions if not recorded promptly.”

“Don’t backload a more ambitious writing project towards the end of the mentorship. This prompted a bit of writer’s block while the mentee’s school year began and interfered with the completion. In retrospect, I should have encouraged shorter “blog” style assignments along the way that could be aggregated into a larger project.”

