



How to be a **GREAT**
Learning Mentor

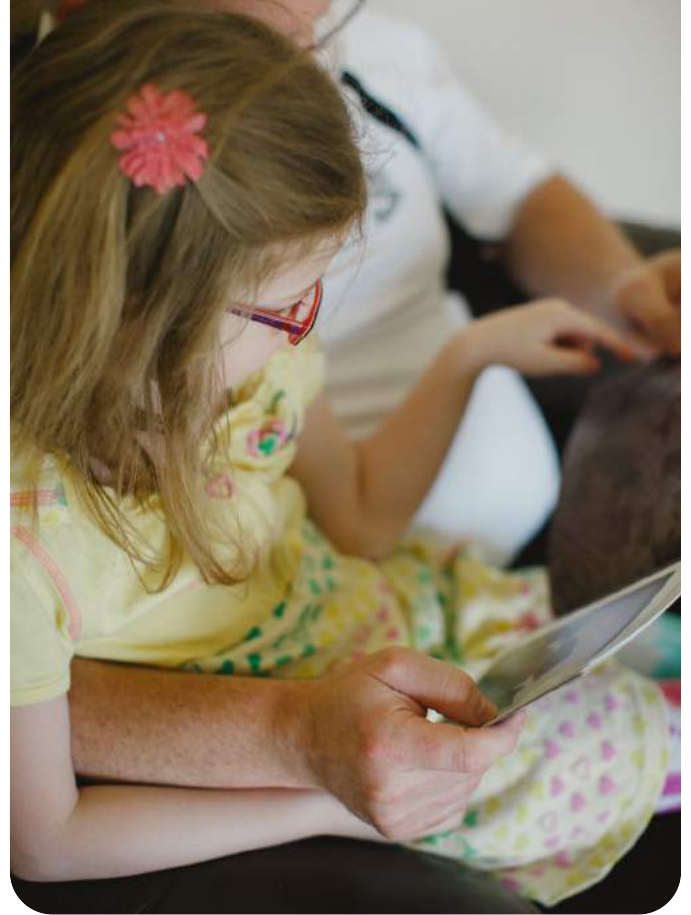
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Effective mentorship requires planning, coordination and communication; it is not a task to be taken lightly. That said, mentorship can be an extremely rewarding experience for both the mentor and the learner.

What is a Learning Mentor?

A home-based learning mentor is any adult who is responsible for learning instruction and support in the home.

It is not always possible for the parent to be the learning mentor. A mentor may be a parent, guardian, relative, friend, or tutor. Mentors, learners and online instructors work as a team to help learners successfully complete their online courses.



Anticipate Common Mentor Responsibilities

There is a misconception that online learners may not have the same learning supports as their peers in a traditional school setting. However, home-based learners benefit from the personal attention of a learning mentor who can provide daily encouragement and support in a way that meets a learner's individual needs. While the role of the learning mentor may be slightly different as a student progresses from elementary to high school, an effective mentor is key to student success in an online environment.

Registration	Goal Setting & Timelines	Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assisting with course registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Setting course timelines based on Ministry Required course hours ▶ Establishing clear expectations and guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Organizing course files ▶ Ensuring resources are available ▶ Creating a welcoming learning environment
Course Progression	Communication	Accessing DLC Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Monitoring progress on a daily or weekly basis ▶ Assisting with timely submission of assignments ▶ Coaching learners to become self-directed and independent ▶ Interpreting instructor feedback ▶ Overseeing assessments ▶ Encouraging academic excellence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communicating with online instructors and school administrators ▶ Teaching learners how to compose messages to instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Working with the Career Development teacher to ensure courses meet graduation requirements ▶ As needed, working with Student Support Team to help manage learning challenges

Determine Online Readiness

To quote the Michigan Virtual School Mentor Guide, "online courses require hard work and are not *easier* than traditional classes. In fact, they may be more time consuming because students are using a new and unfamiliar method to access the course and materials and will experience different challenges than they have with face-to-face instruction."

It is important that a learner and his/her support team take time to consider all of the factors that affect learning readiness *before* starting a class. This evaluation process can help to identify skills or circumstances that the learner may want to improve upon or additional support systems to put in place prior to starting the course.

To assist in this evaluation, consider accessing one of two tools:

1. Trent University Online Quiz
www2.trentu.ca/cgi-bin/aptitude.pl
2. Michigan Virtual School Online Readiness Rubric (back page)

In general terms, the process will prompt one to consider:

- ▶ access to technology
- ▶ technology skills
- ▶ work and study habits
- ▶ preferred learning style
- ▶ time management
- ▶ interest/motivation
- ▶ reading and writing skills



"The most rewarding part of being a home school parent is watching your child learn to work independently. As her parent, I know this is a skill that will serve my daughter well throughout her life."

- Chertih

*Mother and Learning Mentor to
Grade 6 Home School Student*

Understand Technology Requirements

Learners should have regular and reliable access to the Internet and a device such as a computer, tablet, or Smartphone available to work from. If reliable internet access is not available in your home, consider contacting your public library or other establishments to determine availability.

To view our videos, our video hosting site, *BrainShark*, recommends the following:

- ▶ Supported Browsers
 - Internet Explorer 8, 9 or 10
 - FireFox (latest version)
 - Safari (latest version)
 - Chrome (latest version)
- ▶ Browser Settings
 - allow pop-ups for www.brainshark.com
 - enable Java script
 - enable cookies
- ▶ Flash Player
 - Adobe Flash (version 9 or higher)
- ▶ Recommended Screen Size
 - 1024 x 768 pixels
- ▶ Bandwidth
 - 56kbps for standard presentations
 - 100kbps for presentations with video slides
- ▶ Mobile Devices
 - Blackberry
 - Apple iPhone
 - Apple iPad
 - Apple iPod Touch
 - Android
- ▶ Video Players
 - [Classic Media Player](#) (free download available)

If you require support in downloading these programs or adjusting your settings, please call 306.252.1000.

All Sun West DLC students must agree to our Acceptable Use Policy which clearly states the expectations of staff and students when accessing electronic content.

Prepare the Ideal Learning Environment

Creating a hospitable work space and establishing structure in the learner's day is foundational to helping learners develop good learning habits and find success in an online learning environment.

Here are some questions to guide your discussion with the home-based learner before starting an online course:

Where will I do my course work?

- ▶ Where is the best location for me to do my work?
- ▶ Why is this a good learning location for me?
- ▶ Can I leave my materials out or do they need to be put away?
- ▶ How can I reduce distractions in my work space?

When is the best time for me to do my coursework?

- ▶ How many hours a day will I devote to school?
Full time students can expect to dedicate approximately 5 hours/day to school work.
- ▶ What time of the day will I start?
- ▶ What time of the day will I finish?
- ▶ What are my completion goals?
- ▶ How often will I take breaks?
- ▶ How will I track my goals?

What is my timeframe for completing my coursework?

- ▶ What date did I start?
- ▶ What date do I hope to be done?
Teachers are not available during summer months; please adjust schedule accordingly

How will I keep track of my progress?

- ▶ How will I keep track of the work I have done (e.g. checklist, calendar)?
- ▶ What tracking resources are available in my course?
- ▶ How often will I meet with my learning mentor to show my progress?
- ▶ How often will I contact my online instructors with updates or questions?
- ▶ How often will I submit coursework (formative and summative assessments, unit exams, etc.)?

What supplies will I need to work on my courses?

- ▶ Computer/Internet
- ▶ E-textbook/Textbook
- ▶ Calculator/Binder

Who will help me with coursework?

- ▶ Online Instructor (Please contact us or visit us! We are here to help.)
- ▶ Mentor
- ▶ Peers
- ▶ Tutor
- ▶ Other



Get Started

If this your first time as a learning mentor, or even if you have done this before, starting each course on the right foot can help ensure that the learner has a positive online learning experience. Take some time *before* the first day of study to:

Get To Know Moodle

Sun West Distance Learning Centre uses an online information management site called Moodle to store all course materials such as handouts, instructions, and videos.

Upon registration, learners are assigned a Moodle account with a log-in ID and password to access their courses. They will receive an email with that information along with a detailed 'How To' package and all necessary Moodle enrolment codes (distributed to both learner and mentor).

At the K-9 level, the Moodle course aligns with the print resource package and worksheets that we provide. At the high school level, all course materials and instructions are provided in Moodle.

- ▶ create your Moodle account (directions in the registration email)
- ▶ log in and check that course links are available
- ▶ review the details of the course
- ▶ bookmark the Moodle course web address
- ▶ read the instructor guidelines
- ▶ become acquainted with how to navigate within Moodle and how the course is organized
- ▶ read through the course outline/syllabus and calendar
- ▶ determine how to contact the instructor if you have questions
- ▶ establish a course timeline or pacing guide with check-in points
- ▶ make a plan for reporting progress between the learner and the learning mentor
- ▶ complete any other learning environment and daily routine conversation

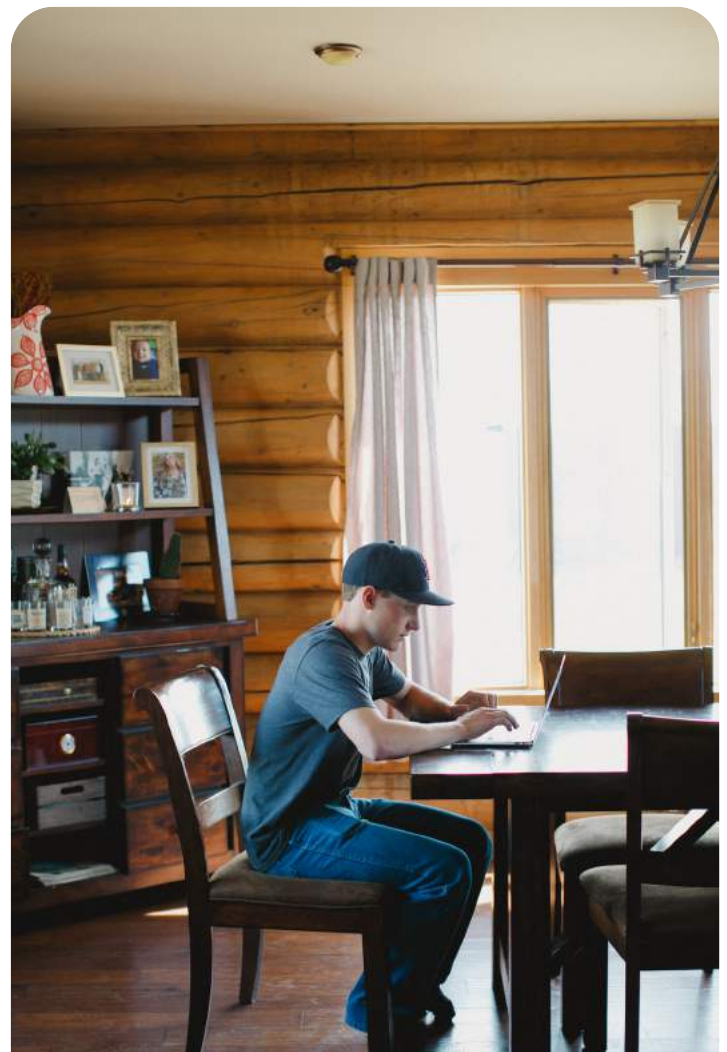
Until the learner is capable of doing these things by his/herself, the mentor will be responsible for the preparation, administration and supervision of the course and student work. As learners get older they gradually assume higher levels of responsibility for these tasks and the role of the mentor will transition into one of encouragement, time management and support.

Once these steps are complete, your learner is ready to start lesson one. Good luck!

"The mentor activity or function that I believe has the most impact on my childrens' success is providing a consistent routine for their learning and establishing reasonable goals and deadlines. "

- Jolie V

Mother and Learning Mentor to Grade 4 & 7 Home School Students





Monitor Student Progress

Setting and maintaining a regular schedule serves to benefit both the learner and the mentor. Keeping abreast of student progress ensures that the learning mentor can take appropriate steps to support the learner's momentum.

On the other hand, because they routinely report back to their mentor, learners get used to meeting regular deadlines which eventually contributes to the development of their own time management skills.

Online instructors will provide a *suggested* timeline which can be tailored to reflect the realities and intentions of individual learners.

In setting those schedules, keep in mind that the pace and path of learning will be different depending on the learning style,

interests and information processing abilities of the learner. They may choose to start three or four courses at once, as they would in a school setting, or they may choose to focus on one or two courses at a time.

This decision, whatever it may be, should be shared amongst the mentor, the learner and the online instructors so that they can work collaboratively towards learner success.

The DLC schedules two evenings per school year for mentors, learners and instructors to jointly discuss progress. We encourage mentors to schedule an appointment and take advantage of these opportunities to ask questions and ensure that they are doing all that they can to facilitate success.

A few simple steps to ensure that timelines and schedules are front of mind for everyone:

- ▶ Review the instructor's course outlines or assignment calendar and add due dates to personalized pacing guide, and assignment and assessment calendars.
- ▶ Help learners set their own daily goals. If daily goals are not met, additional time on coursework will be necessary.
- ▶ Ask student to log in and explain his/her grade book progress.

If your learner requires adaptations for coursework, please contact the course instructor. Our Student Support team is available to assist learning mentors with adaptation strategies and other supports.

Explore Learning Resources

Full time DLC students have access to a variety of free digital learning resources. Contact your DLC instructor for log-in information.

Microsoft Office Products	Office 365 access provides families access to Microsoft Word, Power Point, Excel. Office 365 email account available upon request.
Mathletics	A Canadian-based math site that provides a fun way for students to practice their basic math skills.
RAZ Kids	Helps students improve their reading skills. Students can access a wide library of books at any reading level.
Reading Eggs	Another fun and engaging way to practice reading skills.
Pearson E-Texts	The e-text version of our Pearson textbooks can enhance a child's understanding. Content is provided in an interactive format and additional videos make this online resource option a favourite with students.
Learn 360	A Canadian learning solution; more than 1500 feature films and documentaries are available in English and 1000+ are available in French.
ROVER	A video-on-demand service that provides learners with the convenience of immediate access to streamed, educational videos.

"Fostering independence is the most valuable thing I do for my children and their success. By giving them the confidence to try new things and the ability to do research, I feel they will be set up for the future."

- Tara M

*Mother and Learning Mentor
to Grade 6, 8 & 11 Home School Students*



Refresh and Recharge

As a learning mentor, you have a unique opportunity to observe your learner's overall performance which at times might benefit from a few moments to rest and reboot. Studies confirm that taking a break can result in elevated levels of productivity, success and an improved outlook on the future; this is especially true for those who spend hours huddled in front of a computer.


Sometimes good, old-fashioned exercise is the solution; that may be a walk, run, stretch, or quick game of tag depending on the age of your learner. Other times, a nap may be what's needed to get the brain back on track. During this time, we encourage you to guide your learner towards activities that do not involve a screen or social media. Get them out and moving.

Of course, the duration and timing of effective study breaks will vary from learner to learner. For this reason, it's important for every learner to determine the best schedule to suit their own needs. In your mentor role, you can help your learner identify strategies for remaining alert and focused, keeping them on track to achieve peak academic performance.

Online Readiness Rubric

Produced by Michigan Virtual School

Of the many self-assessment tools available, we have shared this one because of its simplicity and clarity. Every learner will fall somewhere on the spectrum of more or less ready; once that place is identified, steps can be taken by both the learner and the mentor to move them further towards the "more ready" end of the scale.

Skill Set	Student Readiness			
	More Ready		Less Ready	
Technology Skills	Learner has excellent computer skills and significant experience using a word processor, email application and web browser, and is comfortable downloading information from the Internet and using other technology tools and applications.	Learner has strong computer skills and experience using a word processor, email application and web browser.	Learner has limited experience using a computer and the Internet, and has expressed a strong interest in developing more skills in this area.	Learner has little, if any, experience using a computer or the Internet, and has minimal desire to develop more skills in this area.
Work and Study Habits	Learner does not need reminders or assistance in completing routine assignments, usually finishes homework ahead of time and has successfully completed an independent study experience or taken an online course.	Learner rarely needs reminders or assistance in completing routine assignments and has demonstrated good independent study habits.	Learner sometimes needs reminders and assistance in completing routine assignments and has pledged to spend 5-10 hours per week on each online course enrollment.	Learner often needs reminders to complete routine assignments, often turns homework in late and is not able to spend 5-10 hours per week on each online course.
Learning Style	Learner is a self-directed learner and demonstrates a high level of comfort and skill in learning new material without requiring real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support, and deals well with ambiguity.	In general, the learner is self-directed and does not require real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support.	Learner is beginning to demonstrate a behavior of self-directed learning and sometimes requires real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow up support.	Learner is not a self-directed learner and often requires real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support.
Interest and Motivation	Student has a strong interest in the content area of the online course offering, is highly motivated to enroll in an online course and has a positive and realistic attitude toward online learning.	Learner has an interest in the content area of the online course offering, and has a positive and realistic attitude toward online learning.	Learner has an interest in the content area of the online course offering, but has expressed concerns about enrolling in an online course or has an unrealistic attitude toward online learning.	Learner has little or no interest in the content area of the online course offering and has a negative or unrealistic attitude toward online learning.
Reading and Writing Skills	Learner is reading above grade level, has strong reading comprehension skills and has demonstrated success with complex writing assignments.	Learner is reading at or above grade level and has demonstrated success with a variety of writing assignments.	Learner is reading at grade level and has demonstrated limited proficiency with writing assignments.	Learner is reading below grade level and has experienced difficulty with routine writing assignments.
Technology and Connectivity	Learner has daily access to a computer with high-speed service to the Internet.	Learner has consistent access to a computer with moderate-speed service to the Internet.	Learner has limited access to a computer with low-speed service to the Internet.	Learner does not have consistent access to a computer and a reliable connection to the Internet.
Time Management	Learner has demonstrated outstanding time management skills while participating in other activities.	Learner has demonstrated effective time management skills.	Learner is beginning to demonstrate effective time management skills.	Learner does not manage his or her time effectively.

