



# Principles of effective digital mentoring

THE DIGITAL MENTOR'S HANDBOOK



# Welcome

If you're reading this Handbook, it's likely that you are either an aspiring digital mentor, or you are already mentoring others to improve their digital ability. You may volunteer or work in a community organisation, or provide a helping hand to family, friends and neighbours when needed.

As a digital mentor, you play a critical role in enabling other Australians to access the benefits and opportunities of being connected online. With your help, people can learn to use the internet and digital technologies to expand their world and participate in society.

This Handbook has been designed to provide you with knowledge and resources to support you on your journey as a digital mentor. The information and suggested activities are backed by the latest research on digital mentoring, including national and international best practice.

You don't have to be an IT expert or a computer whiz to be a digital mentor. Many of the digital skills you use in everyday life can be highly valuable to those who've had little exposure to technology. And remember, mentoring is a two-way street. You'll be sure to learn plenty of new tips and tricks along the way from your learners too!

Although mentoring is rewarding, it can also have its challenges, which is why we developed this Handbook. We hope this Handbook will help you feel empowered with new skills, techniques and templates to support your learners and to make the most of your digital mentoring experience.

**Digital mentors are also known as trainers, educators, guides or teachers. Learners may also be referred to as trainees, students or mentees.**

**The principles in this Handbook have been developed by the Queensland University of Technology. You can read the full report 'Digital Mentoring in Australian Communities' at [auspost.com.au/digitalmentoringreport](https://auspost.com.au/digitalmentoringreport)**

# Why become a digital mentor?

The internet has transformed almost every aspect of life – we use the internet to socialise, shop, work and play online. But for the 2.5 million Australians<sup>1</sup> who are not online, the education, health, social and financial benefits of being connected remain out of reach.

This can be for a variety of reasons, including lack of internet access or the cost of internet connection and devices. Even when people do have access to digital technologies, they may not have the ability to use them effectively. We know that building digital skills and confidence is best achieved with face-to-face support from a digital mentor, like you!

Digital mentors can help their learners to have positive and meaningful digital experiences that enrich their lives. This could be connecting with a friend through social media or joining an online group related to their favourite hobby. It might be keeping up to date with the latest news, learning a specific skill, or addressing specific questions and concerns.

Many digital mentors help people to experience ‘light bulb’ moments when they master digital skills that could change their lives. This could be something as simple as being able to download an exercise app to track their steps, or video-calling a grandchild for the first time.

1 Australian Digital Inclusion Index (2019). About digital inclusion in Australia.



**“I love seeing the smiles, hearing the happiness... I like seeing the joy in people’s faces”**

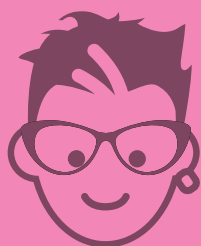
– Eva, Lively

A research project conducted by Queensland University of Technology in 2019 identified eight key principles of effective digital mentoring. These principles include the behaviours, attitudes and actions that lead to positive mentor-learner partnerships.

# 8 principles of effective

1

**Your digital mentoring style**



**page 5**

2

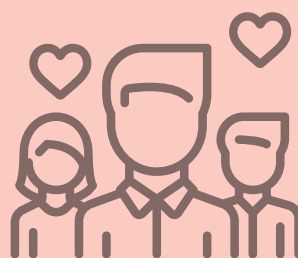
**Motivating your learners**



**page 11**

3

**Creating safe spaces**



**page 17**

4

**Interest-driven learning**

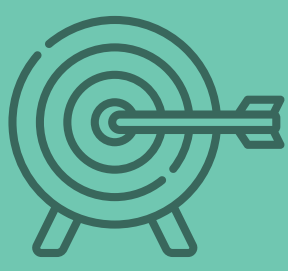


**page 25**

# digital mentoring



**Setting learning goals**



**page 31**



**Overcoming challenges**



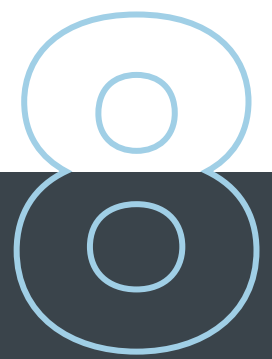
**page 37**



**Making connections**



**page 43**



**Measuring impact**



**page 49**

Explore this Handbook to identify the principles that are of greatest interest and relevance to *you*. You can go through any or all of the principles in an order that suits you. Take the opportunity to test the approaches provided under each principle.

You may decide to undertake some of these activities with your learners. You might also like to revisit principles and activities along your digital mentoring journey.



**“Probably one of the most important things is patience... just to be patient and encouraging, I think.”**

Brian, Computer Pals for Seniors – Northern Beaches



# Your digital mentoring style

## OBJECTIVES

Understand the key attributes of effective digital mentors.

Identify your unique digital mentoring style, including your strengths and motivations to mentor, and opportunities to improve your skills.

## SUMMARY

Digital mentors bring their unique life experiences, skills, interests and strengths to their partnerships with learners.

We know from research that there are some critical behaviours that successful digital mentors exhibit. These include:

**KINDNESS** – being warm, accepting and caring towards learners (e.g. not judging them for their level of knowledge or for how quickly they learn)

**PATIENCE** – being willing to stick to something no matter how long it takes, even if it means repeating the same small steps dozens of times

**EMPATHY** – being willing to try to imagine what the mentoring experience is like for the learners, including their fears and frustrations

**GENEROSITY** – being open and honest with learners and giving them your full attention for the duration of the mentoring session

**FLEXIBILITY** – being open to changes in learning directions as your learner's needs change (e.g. switching between topics, activities and devices).

**REMEMBER** No-one is perfect – you do not have to become an expert overnight! Bringing a positive attitude to each mentoring session is the most vital action you can take to support your learners. Your digital mentoring style will evolve over time – enjoy the journey!



## ACTIVITY



# Exploring your unique mentoring style

Whether you are a new or experienced digital mentor, it can be helpful to consider the approach you take (or intend to take) to mentoring.

Experienced digital mentors told us that ‘attitude is everything’. Having an open, positive approach is more important than technical knowledge or experience in coaching or teaching. Be yourself and use your natural talents and interests to help others.

### TRY IT!

In this activity you will consider your strengths as a digital mentor and opportunities to improve your confidence, knowledge or skills. You’ll also think about the kind of mentor you aspire to be and the results you’d like to see for yourself, your learner, your organisation and/or community.

Consider the questions below, and on the next page write your responses to reflect on your unique mentoring style. You don’t need to answer them all! Just select the questions that are the most relevant to you.

- Why did I become a mentor?
- Where do my skills lie?
- What am I most interested in teaching?
- What am I less confident or worried about?
- What could I learn from other mentors or learners?
- How could I make my sessions relaxed and fun?
- What approaches seem to work well with my learners?
- What challenges do I need to overcome to feel comfortable as a mentor? (e.g. could I be more patient?)





# My unique digital mentoring style



Why did I become a mentor?

How could I make my sessions relaxed and fun?

Where do my skills lie?

What am I most interested in teaching?

What approaches seem to work well with my learners?



What am I less confident or worried about?

What challenges do I need to overcome to feel comfortable as a mentor?

What could I learn from other mentors or learners?



## Being flexible and having empathy

Taking a flexible and empathetic approach is critical to being an effective digital mentor. Good mentors listen, are patient and 'go with the flow'.

Particularly in the first few mentoring sessions, you can help set people at ease by reassuring them that there are no silly questions or wrong turns.

As with any new skill, practice is crucial! Keep this in mind when helping others to learn new skills. And don't forget you can learn from your learners too!

### TRY IT!

Put yourself in your learner's shoes by remembering that you were new to technology once as well.

Think about a time you struggled to use digital technology and someone helped you. How did you feel? Who helped you? What did they do? How was it resolved? What did you learn?

On the opposite page, write down what happened in three steps under the headings provided. Consider how you were helped and what your digital mentor could have done differently.

How can you apply what you learn from this activity to your own digital mentoring sessions?



# My previous experience as a digital learner



**STEP 1** Describe your technology challenge. What happened?

**STEP 2** How did your digital mentor support your needs?

**STEP 3** Could your experience have been improved? If so, how?



**“ [Take it] step by step, take it gently,  
let them achieve something first. ”**

Nan, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA)



# Motivating your learners



## OBJECTIVES

Understand your learner's existing attitudes towards technology, and their motivation for learning about the digital world.

Understand your learner's existing skills to set a baseline to build upon, and build confidence.

## SUMMARY

People seek out digital mentors for many reasons. Some are excited to learn new skills, while others may feel they have no choice or feel obliged to learn new digital skills by a family member. Understanding these reasons is a crucial step in building a strong connection with your learner.

Once you understand your learner's motivation, you can begin to build trust and rapport through thoughtful questions and active listening.

Our research found that the following approaches can help mentors effectively engage with learners:

**ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS** – asking questions that cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no'.

**ASKING QUALIFYING QUESTIONS** – asking for more details to deepen understanding.

**REPEATING RESPONSES BACK** – paraphrasing what the learner said to check your understanding.

**SHOWING, NOT DOING** – not taking over the task in order to complete it quicker.

**DISPLAYING OPEN BODY LANGUAGE** – having an attentive but relaxed manner.

**SHOWING SENSITIVITY TO EMOTIONS** – checking regularly with your learner throughout the session to ensure they feel comfortable and supported.

Where appropriate, you may like to involve your learner's friends or family members in their digital journey to broaden their network of support.



## ACTIVITY



# Getting to know your learner

Digital mentoring starts with a conversation. Before technology is used or even mentioned, it's important to get to know the person you will be working with: their experiences, ideas, fears, hopes and reservations. As a mentor, you cannot assume what others need or want. Rather, you must listen to their story and empathise with their circumstances.

### TRY IT!

This activity is designed to help you get to know your learner, which will inform your approach to digital mentoring sessions.

**STEP 1** Before mentoring begins, sit down and have a conversation with your learner to understand a little more about them. You could start with these questions:

- What do you do day-to-day?
- Where do you live, work and 'play'?
- Who do you spend time with?
- What brought you here today?

After your conversation, make some notes about what you were seeing, hearing and feeling. Think about what you sensed, rather than what was explicitly said.

**STEP 2** Ask yourself if there was anything you could relate to in their story. Have you been in a similar situation before? Do you share any frustrations or get excited about the same things? Write down things you have in common and how you might use them to improve sessions. Also, what are your differences and how will you navigate them?



# Getting to know your learner



## ACTIVITY

**STEP 1** Notes about my learner and their life experiences.

**STEP 2** Ways I can relate to my learner.

# 2

ACTIVITY



## Building on existing skills

While some learners might believe they have low digital ability, they may be surprised to realise they can already use digital technologies. On the opposite page is a list of some digital skills that you (and/or your learner) may already possess and some suggestions about how these skills can be applied in different situations. Acknowledging these baseline skills can help boost confidence and be a starting point for learning more.

To open a conversation about existing skills, try asking your learner about things they are likely to already be able to do. If they answer 'Yes' this can set a positive tone and 'can do' attitude for digital mentoring sessions.

### TRY IT!

This activity will help you to recognise how you (and your learner) can transfer existing digital skills into other situations.

Consider the list of digital skills on the opposite page and the different types of real life uses for these skills. For example, someone who can use a touch screen at an ATM, may also be able to use a touch screen to buy movie tickets, use a shopping mall directory, or top up a travel card.

For each of the digital skills listed, add more points to the 'uses in real life' column. Then, think about some further digital skills (and their uses in real life) and write them in the blank rows at the bottom of the table.

You may like to complete this activity with your learner to spark discussion and help boost their confidence.





# How I can translate digital skills to other situations

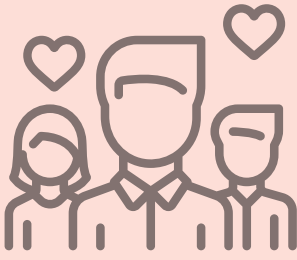


DIGITAL SKILL	USES IN REAL LIFE
Use a touch screen	Withdraw money at an ATM Use a shopping directory Pay for parking
Use a swipe card	Use a travel card Borrow books from the library
Scan a document	Preserve photos Save important documents
Send/receive a text	Receive appointment reminders
Make a mobile call	Book a taxi
Fill out an online form	Apply for a job
Take a digital photo	



**“ [Learners] need to have a friendly, non-threatening environment, where [they] can learn at their own pace ”**

Nan, Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association



# Creating safe spaces



## OBJECTIVES

Understand the features of a welcoming, safe, inclusive and non-threatening learning environment.

Understand how to create safety in your digital mentor-learner partnership.

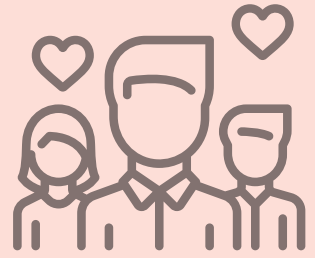
## SUMMARY

### Physical learning spaces

Whether you are working with learners one-on-one or in a group, creating an appropriate physical environment for learning will lead to more enjoyable and successful sessions for everyone involved. Spaces that feel welcoming and non-threatening for mentors and learners have the following features:

- Stable internet connection.
- Appropriate technology for learners e.g. tablets or computers, familiar operating systems, the latest virus software and software packages.
- Wheelchair accessibility and any other accessibility requirements.
- Sturdy and comfortable furniture.
- Well-lit and aired rooms.

Arranging the physical space to place mentors and learners on an even playing field will help put everyone at ease. For instance, instead of a traditional classroom set up (teacher at the front), people can be seated in a circle so they can interact with each other easily. Sometimes tables are not needed at all, particularly if you are using handheld devices such as phones or tablets.



# 3

## **Emotional, psychological and ethical safety**

Digital mentors have a duty of care to their learners, but you are not responsible for your learner's choices or behaviour. If your learner displays behaviour that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, it's ok to end the mentoring session early. You cannot support your learners if you do not feel safe and supported yourself. It might help to ensure other people are available to support you during sessions if needed. You could also speak to your supervisor, trainer or manager about ways your organisation or others can support the learner further.

## **Time for a break...**

Don't forget to schedule breaks so that everyone can stay fresh and focused. And never underestimate the power of tea, coffee and biscuits to get the conversation and positive interactions started!





## ACTIVITY



# Assessing the space

Before beginning mentoring sessions, consider what resources you have access to. The table below suggests the kinds of physical, technical or social resources that might be available to you, depending upon your location and the context of your digital mentoring role.

PHYSICAL		TECHNICAL		SOCIAL	
Tables	Games	PC/Mac computer	Smart TV	Other mentors	Seniors groups
Chairs	Room/location	Mobile device	Speakers	Other learners	Neighbourhood
Couch	Outside spaces	Projector	Bring Your Own	Supervisor	Houses or
Coffee table	Radio music	Extension	Device (BYOD)	Venue staff	Community
Whiteboard	player	lead/cords	Digital camera	Friends/family	Centres
Books/notes	Lined paper/	Online content	Connectivity	Local libraries	
Tea/coffee	sticky notes/pens	Software	(e.g. Wi-Fi)	Local council	

### TRY IT!

This activity will help you plan your safe space for digital mentoring.

**STEP 1** Based on the table above, think about and list the resources you have available to create a positive digital learning experience for you and your learners.

**STEP 2** Use this list to write down one or more statements about how you could use these resources to set up your safe space for learning. It is important to get the basics right, such as providing a stable internet connection. Also, are

there specific requirements such as wheelchair access, or large font for course notes? Is the space noisy or quiet, and can others listen in? You could also draw a map of the space if want to.

**STEP 3** Ask your learners! Involving your learners in this activity can help to create a sense of ownership of their digital learning experience. Of course, there will be limitations on the resources you have access to, but something as small as opening the windows for fresh air may make a big difference to your learners.



# Assessing the space



**STEP 1** List of resources available to me

PHYSICAL	TECHNICAL	SOCIAL

**STEP 2** Features of my safe learning space

e.g. I will ensure the Wi-Fi is connected and have the login/password details ready

**STEP 3** Learner ideas and input



## Setting partnership boundaries

While each digital mentoring partnership is unique, it is important for you to set some consistent boundaries to ensure you and your learner feel safe, happy and confident during your sessions together, online and offline.

Some digital mentoring activities present more risks than others. For example, helping someone to find their favourite song on YouTube is low risk and doesn't require sharing any personal information. On the other hand, assisting with online banking, accessing MyGov, or online shopping can put both the mentor and learner in higher risk situations.

There are ways of handling these potentially tricky scenarios that won't offend or intimidate your learner, or place you in a difficult position. We suggest establishing clear boundaries or rules in your first session about your approach to handling your learner's personal information (e.g. bank card details, passwords). You can do this in the first session by having an informal conversation with your learner, or your organisation may provide written information to learners in advance.

### TRY IT!

This activity asks you to consider how you can create 'rules of engagement' that will ensure you feel safe and comfortable in digital mentoring sessions.

**STEP 1** Have a conversation with another digital mentor about safety boundaries for mentoring. Discuss the kinds of ethical issues you may or have already faced. For example, how you could best help someone to use internet banking? How can this put you at risk? How can you avoid difficult situations or overcome them when they arise? Write your thoughts in the table on the opposite page.

**STEP 2** After thinking about a few scenarios, come up with some of your own 'rules of engagement' that you feel comfortable with.

You may like to share your notes, scenarios and rules of engagement with your supervisor or another digital mentor to get feedback on your approach.





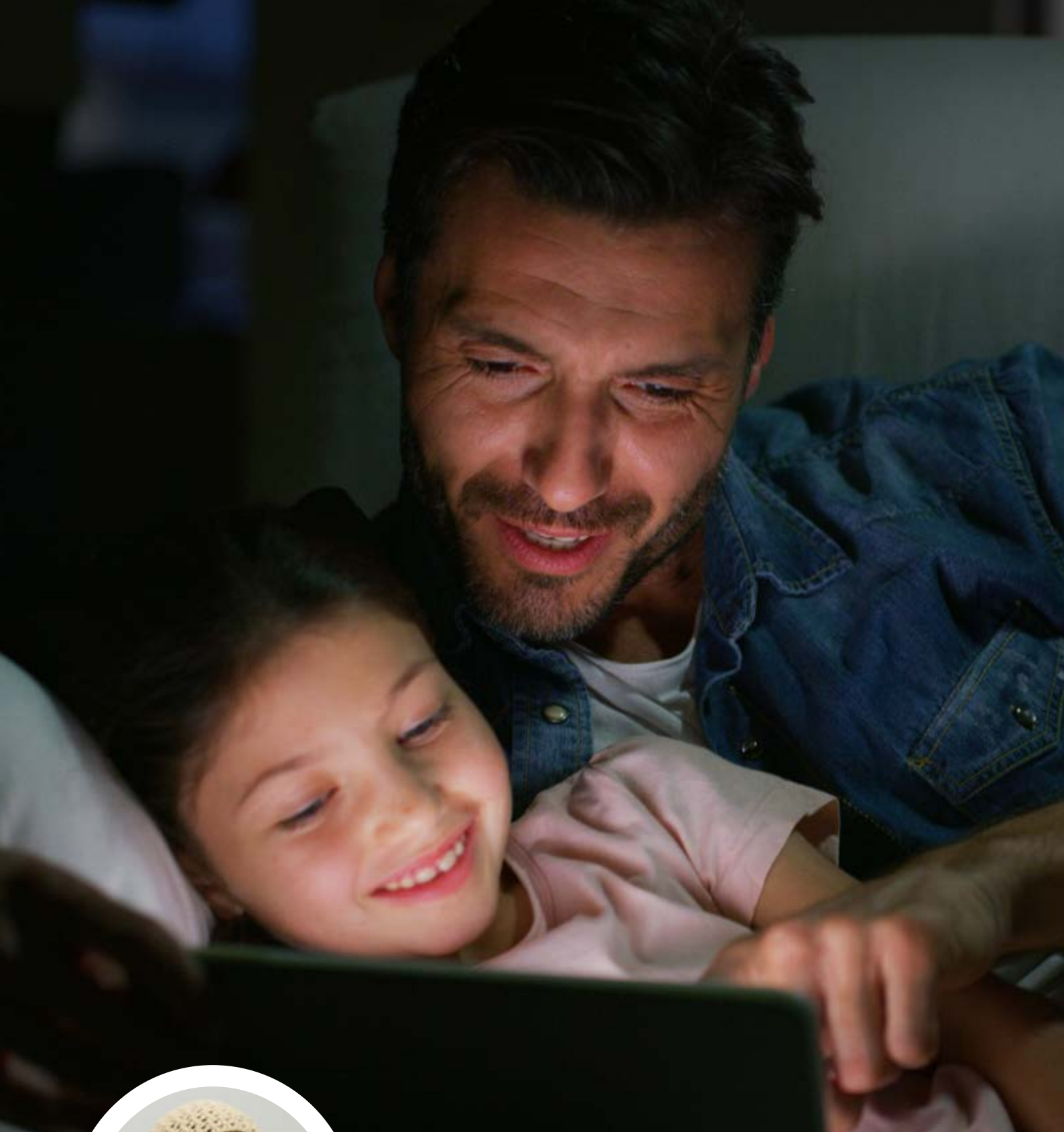
# Setting partnership boundaries



## STEP 1 Identify risks and solutions for my sessions

SITUATION	ETHICAL ISSUES	HOW TO AVOID
e.g. Learner asks me to pay a bill online for them.	e.g. I shouldn't know their private, financial information.	e.g. Tell learner that I can walk them through the process, but cannot complete the transaction for them.

**STEP 2** My 'rules of engagement'



**“ My advice to people thinking of becoming mentors? Try... and relate to your students, be direct and try and find out what they want, not what you can teach them. ”**

Lilia, Computer Pals for Seniors - Northern Beaches



# Interest-driven learning



## OBJECTIVES

Understand your learner's interests to ensure your digital mentoring sessions are relevant, interesting and engaging.

## SUMMARY

Interest-driven learning is about ensuring the learner's digital learning experience with you is based on their own personal interests and specific needs. It is about allowing the learner's passions to direct their learning rather than sticking to a set curriculum (although both approaches can be used together).

Not surprisingly, we are more open to learning if we are personally interested in the content. For example, learning how to access YouTube videos is more compelling if it is related to a hobby that we are interested in, such as gardening tutorials. Your learners will learn faster and more effectively when your sessions relate to their own lives and will directly benefit them in some way.

A similar approach should be taken when learners are learning about online services and resources. For example, whilst your learner might prefer to speak to someone face-to-face about government services, they may need to navigate MyGov in order to access their pension or benefits. Explaining the benefits of online access to your learner may help them engage more easily with what you are teaching them.

Once you understand your learner's interests and needs, it may also be helpful to ask your learner how they learn best. For example, do they prefer a 'trial and error' approach, being shown first, or having the task explained in detail before giving it a go?

Encourage learners to write their own notes on what they are learning, so they can replicate what you have shown them. You can also support your learner in setting out their notes in a way that makes sense for them. It can be helpful to pause, and ask learners to explain what you are working through in their own words, or show you how to do the task using their own notes as a guide.



## ACTIVITY



## Identifying interests and needs

By understanding what people want to do online, we can help them make better decisions about the devices they acquire, the websites and apps they access, and the types of software or platforms they use. People's online tasks may fall into two categories:

**NEEDS** Tasks that we need to do to get by in life that usually involve accessing a business, organisation or service online (e.g. paying a bill from an energy company, registering a vehicle with the transport department)

**HOBBIES** Tasks we like to do to make life more enjoyable (e.g. play a game on an app, connect with friends via social media).

### TRY IT!

The aim of this activity is to identify tasks you (and your learners) commonly do online, and to think about how you can incorporate them into your digital mentoring sessions. There are two steps:

**STEP 1** On the opposite page write down three of your needs and three of your hobbies. Then identify the types of digital technologies that enable you to do those things online. For example, perhaps you pay bills (need) using PayPal or BPAY (technology). Or you may chat to friends (hobby) using Snapchat or Skype (technology).

**STEP 2** Consider how you could draw on your own needs and interests to inform your choices for technologies and topics in mentoring sessions. For example, you could share your love of comics by showing learners how to search for Marvel or DC merchandise on eBay.

You may also like to complete the 'Step 1' component of this activity with your learner.



# Identifying interests and needs



**STEP 1** My digital needs and hobbies.

## NEEDS: THINGS I NEED TO DO

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## HOBBIES: THINGS I LIKE TO DO

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**STEP 2** My considerations for digital mentoring sessions

e.g. I enjoy knitting, so I like to watch videos on Youtube about knitting that teach me new skills.



## Mapping digital connections

When we know what our interests are, we can use them to explore digital connections with relevant people, resources and organisations. For example, a photographer may make social connections with fellow enthusiasts through a local photographers' Facebook group. Or they may need to buy a specific replacement part through an online store.

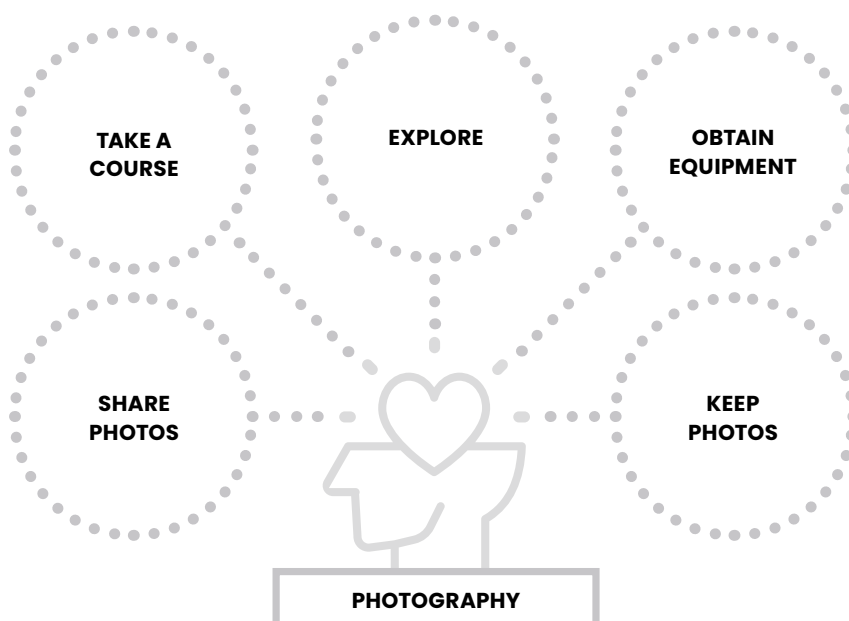
### TRY IT!

This activity asks you to map digital connections surrounding your interests and hobbies.

**STEP 1** Pick one of your interests and write it in the centre circle on the opposite page. Identify activities related to that interest and write them in the outside circles (see example below).

**STEP 2** Identify ways of carrying out these activities digitally or online. For example, one way a photographer can share photos is via social media sites such as Instagram or Flickr.

You may also like to assist your learner to complete this activity.

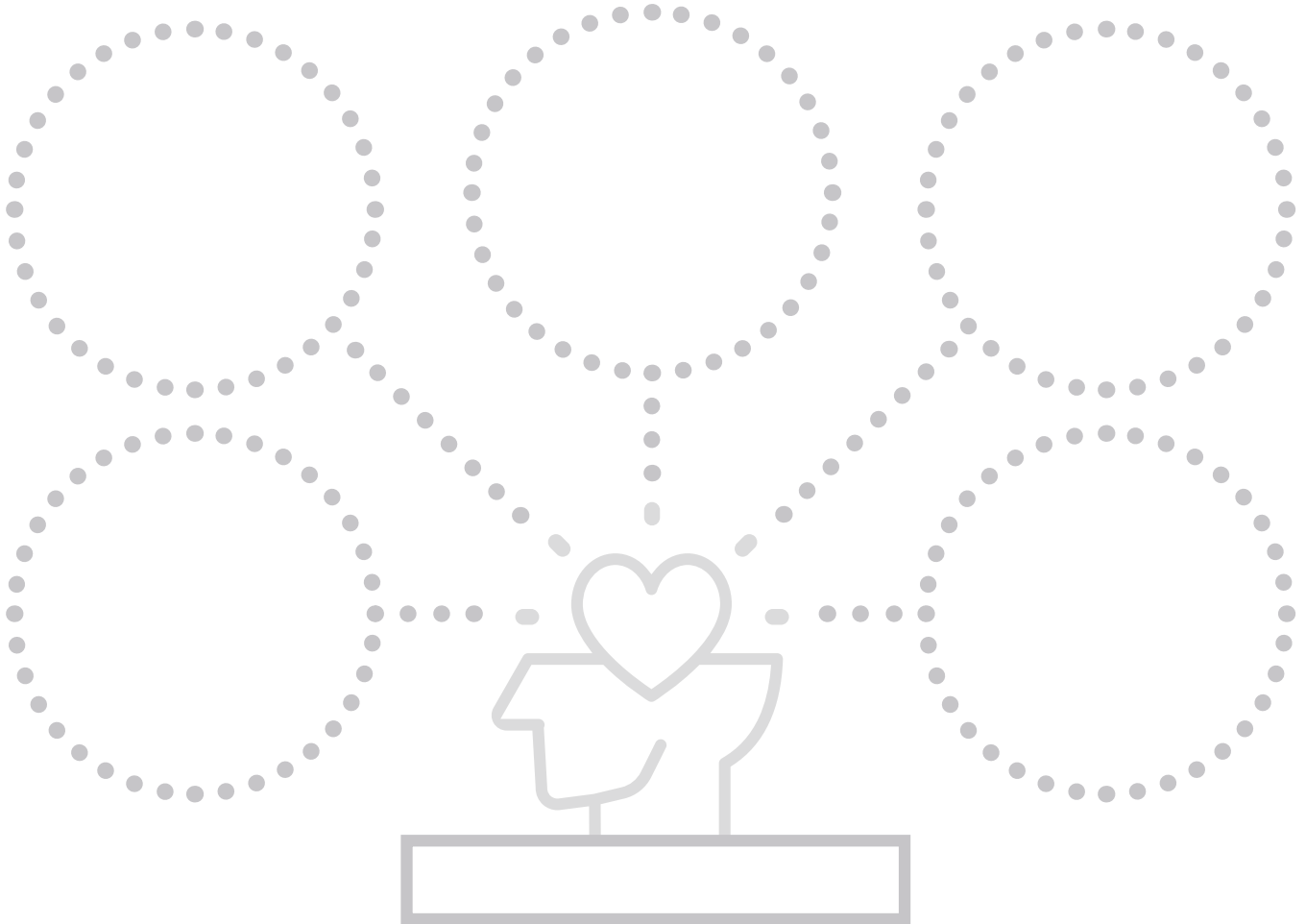




# Mapping digital connections



**STEP 1** My interest and related activities



**STEP 2** How I can make these connections online

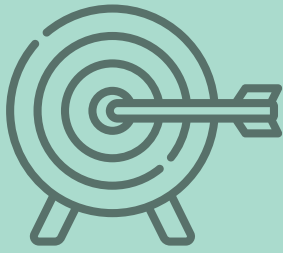
A large rectangular area enclosed by a dotted border, intended for writing notes on how to make digital connections online.



**“Mentoring needs to be flexible and tailored. What is the client interested in discovering or learning?”**

- Paul, Lively





# Setting learning goals



## OBJECTIVES

Understand how to help your learner set effective, meaningful and flexible learning goals.

Learn how to build a plan to help your learner to reach their goals.

## SUMMARY

People will come to you to learn an array of different skills for a variety of reasons. Some learners may not be able to say what they want to learn or why, they just know they need help. Many will lack confidence and even be fearful of technology in general. Others however, might be looking for new ways to advance their existing skills.

Setting goals can help make mentoring sessions more focused and productive. Small goals can be set at the beginning of each session, and longer-term goals could be carried over several weeks or months of digital mentoring. Most importantly, goals need to be well-defined, meaningful and achievable for all involved.

Even when following a set of lessons for a course, mentors can help learners define and work towards personal and relevant goals. Learning goals do not have to be complex tasks, especially if your learner is just getting started on their digital learning journey.

Examples of shorter-term goals include:

- Learn how to search for recipes using a search engine.
- Set up an email account and learn how to send and receive emails.
- Learn how to listen to music on a smart phone.
- Learn how to purchase groceries from a local supermarket online.

Examples of longer-term goals include:

- Trace and map my family ancestry using online services.
- Create and order a photobook using an online platform.

It may help to break down these longer-term goals into the individual skills/tasks needed to achieve it. In the case of the photo book, this may include capturing, uploading and editing digital images.



## ACTIVITY



## Setting goals together

Setting learning goals will help you focus your digital mentoring sessions, and to track your learner's progress. Remember, you and your learner will get more out of sessions if goals are relevant, interesting and make a difference to people's lives.

### TRY IT!

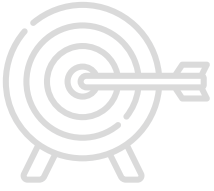
This activity encourages you to set your own learning goals and then work with your learner to help them do the same.

**STEP 1** Have a go at setting some goals of your own to test out the process before working with your learner to help them set their own digital learning goals. It can be helpful to visualise the goal to give it detail and life. How would it feel to achieve the goal? How would life be different or better? Use the sentence prompts on the opposite page to write a goal statement (or two).

**STEP 2** Work with your learner to help them define their own digital learning goals. You may like to choose smaller tasks to learn and practice, or you may like to work with your learner to develop a longer-term goal that will take more than one session to achieve that combines several digital skills.

You and/or your learner may like to draft and re-draft the goal(s) several times until it feels just right. If this seems too overwhelming (for you or them), it's perfectly ok to start off with something simpler, such as 'By the end of this session I will have learned how to read my text messages'.

Here are a few sentences to get you started...



# Setting goals together



## ACTIVITY

### MY LEARNING GOALS

#### EXAMPLE 1

I want to learn \_\_\_\_\_  
to be able to \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

#### EXAMPLE 2

I aim to be able to do \_\_\_\_\_  
so I can \_\_\_\_\_  
with \_\_\_\_\_

#### EXAMPLE 3

I want to know how to \_\_\_\_\_  
so that I can connect with \_\_\_\_\_  
and therefore \_\_\_\_\_

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## Plan the journey

Now that you have set a learning goal, you can plan how this can be achieved. Breaking the longer-term goals into smaller steps can make it less daunting and help keep you and your learner focused and on track.

Bear in mind, it's ok to change direction and even go backwards. Some goals will take longer than others and progress may be slow at times. While it can help to have an idea of where you are going, there is no need to set specific dates for completion of milestones, but an overall timeframe might be useful.

Remember, learning and consolidating digital skills takes time and patience. Don't worry if the learning goals take longer to achieve than first expected – you'll still be making progress.

### TRY IT!

In this activity you'll plan how to achieve a learning goal.

Select one of the goals you identified for yourself in the previous activity. Using this template on the opposite page, identify the different steps you'll need to take to achieve

that goal. Think about how you can build on your digital skills along the way. You may also like to draw your own image.

If you find this activity useful, you could also assist your learner to complete it.

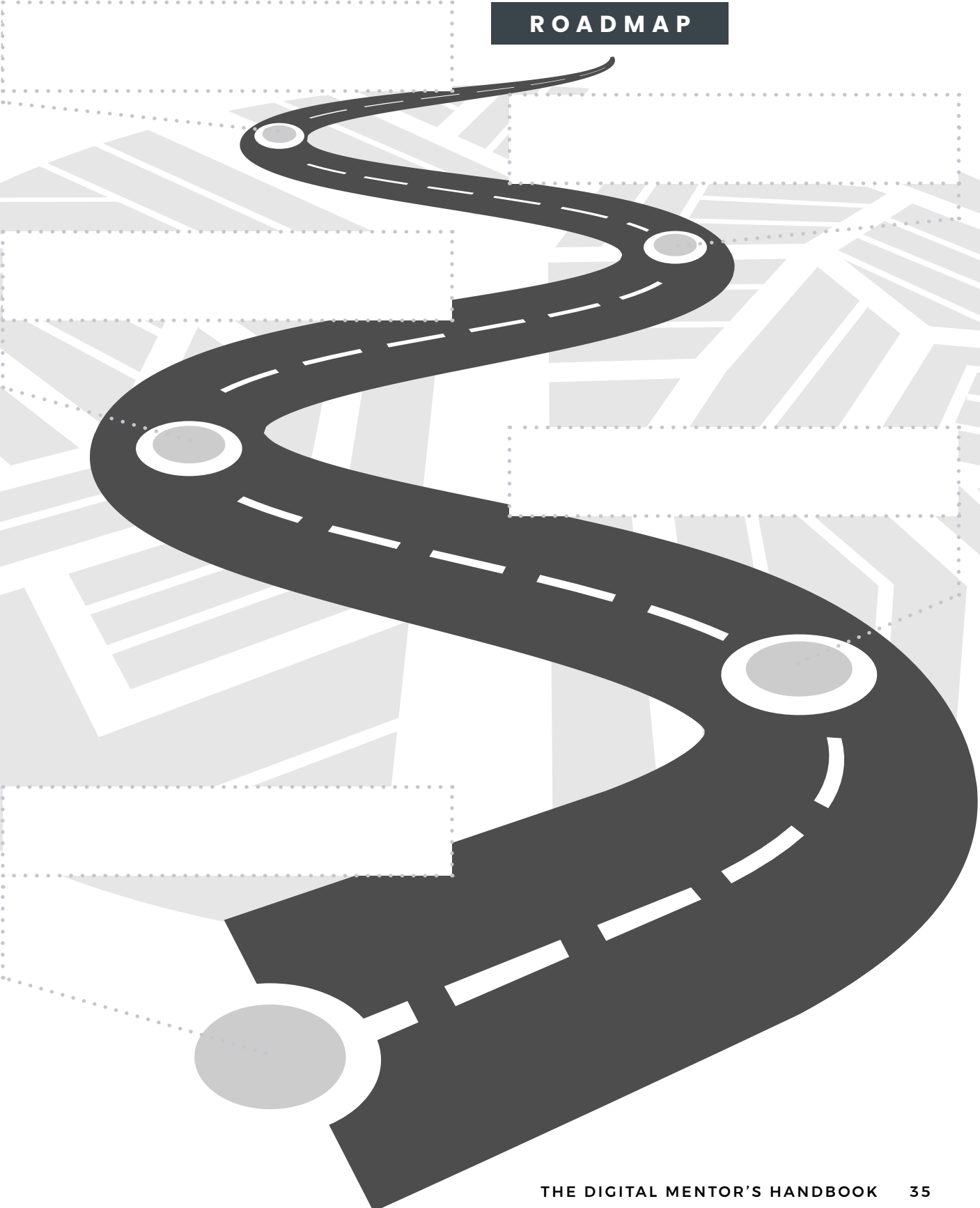


# Plan the journey



**STEP 1** My interest and related activities

**ROADMAP**





**“ It can be helpful to lead people through real world examples to overcome fears. Keep it light and humorous. ”**

– Tom, Tatura Community House



# Overcoming challenges



## OBJECTIVES

Understand the common challenges faced by digital mentors and learners, and identify possible solutions.

Identify common fears that mentors and learners have about technology and digital mentoring, and consider how you will address these concerns.

## SUMMARY

While digital mentors largely find their experiences to be enjoyable and fulfilling, mentoring is not without its challenges. Learners may lack basic skills, feel anxious about technology, or have physical or social obstacles that get in the way of their learning. Digital mentors may have trouble relating to learners at times, or have their own reservations about particular technologies, topics or online activities.

### Common barriers to learning for digital learners include:

- Disinterest in technology.
- Distrust or fear of technology (e.g. fear of being scammed).
- Negative past experiences with technology.
- Handling large amounts of complex information.
- Lack of support at home.
- Lack of confidence.
- Challenges with dexterity, such as using a touchscreen or mouse.
- Physical disabilities.
- Low levels of literacy.
- Fear of failure or of looking silly.

### Common challenges for digital mentors (in supporting their learners) include:

- Keeping up to date with technological advances.
- Disclosure of personal information, such as passwords.
- Miscommunication owing to cultural/language barriers.
- Incompatible/outdated devices and software.
- Mismatched/different skill levels and interests between mentor and learner.
- Limited access to appropriate resources, such as assistive technologies.
- Special needs for individuals, such as people living with disabilities and children.
- Complicated technical jargon.



## ACTIVITY



## Identifying and overcoming challenges

Various barriers and challenges will arise as you go through your digital mentoring journey. You may be able to address some challenges without involving the learner, but others will need to be worked through together with empathy and discretion. For example, if you think your learner lacks confidence, you may like to think of ways to gently support them before asking them to talk about it. We address some ethical issues in Principle 3, so here we will focus on physical and social challenges.

### TRY IT!

This activity asks you to consider the common challenges faced by both digital mentors and learners and encourages you to think of some solutions to tackle them.

Consider how you would approach the example challenges listed on the opposite page for both mentors and learners. What has worked in the past? Is there a better approach you could have taken?

In the blank spaces, write down your own mentor and learner challenges and add your own solutions.

When coming up with these solutions, it may be helpful to go through the 'who, what, when, where and why' of the challenge. What is the problem? When does it happen? Why is it happening?

You may also like to discuss this activity and gain ideas from your supervisor or other digital mentors.





# Identifying and overcoming challenges



CHALLENGES	SOLUTION
The learner asks a question that I don't know the answer to.	Adopt a 'can do' approach. <b>Consider this response:</b> 'That's a good question. Let's work out the answer together.'
The learner asks lots of questions all at once.	Pause/take a breath. Use positive language to address to address their concerns. <b>Consider this response:</b> 'They are all really great queries. Let's write them all down so I make sure I've understood what you mean, and then let's start with the first one and see how we go.'
The learner becomes frustrated.	Acknowledge their feelings, and suggest a way forward. <b>Consider this response:</b> 'Learning these new skills can be really tough and you're doing a great job with all this new information! Let's break down this problem into smaller steps, and see if we can tackle it together.'
The learner feels silly when they can't remember instructions from last week.	Ask your learner to write instructions/things they learnt in their own words to refer to in future sessions.
The learner appears bored or disinterested during your session.	Ask your mentee to write down three things they want to learn and why they want to learn it. Adjust your approach to respond to their interests.

CHALLENGES I MAY FACE	SOLUTION



## Addressing fears about technology

Fear about technology is one of the biggest barriers to getting online and staying connected. Learners may be scared they will ‘break the internet’ or their device, believe technology is beyond their capabilities, or think that they will be taken advantage of by online scammers.

Digital mentors can also experience these fears. They may feel that technology is moving too fast for them, they won’t know enough to teach others, or they have trouble using devices or programs that are unfamiliar to them (e.g. they know how to use Apple iPhones but not Android smart phones).

### TRY IT!

This activity aims to help you (and your learner) overcome fears, either immediately or over time. To figure out the best way to approach a fear, it can help to identify its source. Is it a belief about yourself or your ability? Is it unfamiliar and therefore scary to your learner? Have you had a previous bad experience? Or do you or your learner have unrealistic expectations?

On the opposite page we have listed some common fears, their sources and possible tactics

to deal with them. Fill out the rest of the table by considering some of your own fears and others your learner may have. Share your tactics with your learners, or work with them to identify their own fears, sources and tactics.

You could also discuss this activity with your supervisor or other digital mentors for more ideas and feedback.



# Addressing fears about technology



COMMON LEARNER FEARS	SOURCE	TACTIC
I will break the smart phone.	I believe this but I don't know why. I've never used one before.	Ask someone to demonstrate how to access and understand the smart phone settings.
I'm not a technical person and can't do it.	My kids tell me I'm hopeless at technology.	Think through things I can already do e.g. use pay pass when paying by card.
I tried to write a letter on the computer and ended up losing the whole thing.	I had a bad experience and haven't gone back to it.	Ask someone to teach me how to save documents in logical places where I can find them again.
My identity could be stolen or I could be scammed.	I heard on the news it happened to someone else.	Use resources from trusted sources, such as <a href="https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/">https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/</a>

COMMON MENTOR FEARS	SOURCE	TACTIC
I don't know enough to support my learner, I'm no tech expert!	I believe this but I don't know why. I've never used one before.	Ask someone to demonstrate how to access and understand the smart phone settings.



**“It’s important to know that we’re all navigating the digital world together. We’re all learning and should be committed to co-discovering with mentees.”**

– Lynette, Infoxchange



# Making connections



## OBJECTIVES

Understand how digital technologies that can help make life easier and more enjoyable for you and your learner.

Understand how you can build your digital learning community.

## SUMMARY

For many of us, using the internet to socialise, shop, work and do everyday tasks is something we take for granted. But for those starting out on their digital learning journey, the benefits of going online are not always clear.

### **Making connections for mentors**

Through your digital mentoring sessions, you'll no doubt have conversations with your learner about how the new skills they are learning can benefit their day-to-day lives. You can also help your learner connect with other relevant services, resources and support in their local area. For example, a local library may host free digital literacy classes, or a mobile phone shop may give free advice and discounts to seniors or locals.

### **Making connections for learners**

Digital mentors can also collaborate with and learn from other mentors through community events or other projects. Digital mentors may also involve learners in these projects to provide opportunities for them to apply their new digital skills in the community and to connect with others.



## ACTIVITY



## Expanding one's digital world

Even though digital technologies are everywhere, it's not always obvious to people how they already do (or could) interact with technology. It can be useful to discuss the ways your learners already use the internet, and how they could incorporate digital technology into their day-to-day lives in new ways.

### TRY IT!

This activity asks you to identify your regular activities and the digital technologies you use to complete them. This may help you to demonstrate to learners how important digital technologies are in modern life.

**STEP 1** Using the table on the opposite page, list your typical weekly activities. Then identify ways you already come in to contact with digital technologies, e.g. receiving appointment alerts, using a library self-loans machine, reading the morning news online, or using a banking app to transfer money. Are there any other ways you could use the internet to make your life easier?

**STEP 2** Using a similar template, have a conversation with your learner about the tasks they complete or services they access each week, and explore ways in which these could be completed online. The idea is not to replace all 'real world' interactions with digital transactions, but rather to show learners how they can embrace technology to could make their lives easier.



# Expanding one's digital world



## MY WEEKLY ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

	ACTIVITY	DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY
MONDAY		
TUESDAY	Hair appointment	Text message reminder
WEDNESDAY		
THURSDAY		
FRIDAY		
SATURDAY	Phone grandchildren	FaceTime or Skype
SUNDAY		



ACTIVITY



## Finding your own digital network

As a digital mentor, you may benefit from connecting with other people and organisations to share resources, stories and ideas, and to help keep up your motivation. There are various places in the community to seek support, such as councils (e.g. grants, projects), local businesses, libraries, community centres, interest groups (e.g. dancing, gardening, book clubs), church groups, charities, health centres, men's sheds, and so on.

### TRY IT!

In this activity you will map out your own digital network and consider how you can better connect with others for support and motivation.

**STEP 1** On your own or with someone else (another mentor, a colleague or supervisor) brainstorm relevant services, activities and resources in your community. Use the categories on the opposite page to prompt you. Start by listing your peers and supporters within your organisation. Then, think of other organisations you already know or work with.

**STEP 2** Consider how you could connect or collaborate with your new network by, for example, running a joint event or going on an excursion. How could this benefit you, them and the community?





# Finding your own digital network

## ACTIVITY 2

### STEP 1 My digital network

#### OTHERS

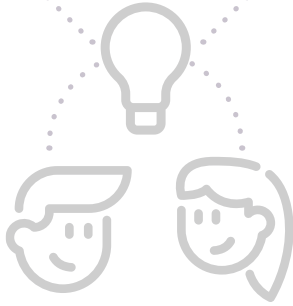
- Peers within my organisation
- Supports within my organisation

#### GOVERNMENT

- Libraries
- Council

#### COMMUNITY

- Seniors club
- Interest group



### STEP 2 Ideas for connecting and collaborating

#### NEW NETWORK

#### NEW COLLABORATION

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**“We need feedback (from learners) ASAP after completion of training... Self-review is also important – very important!”**

– Bill, Computer Pals for Seniors, Turramurra



# Measuring Impact

## OBJECTIVES

Learn how to reflect on and develop your own digital mentoring approach.

Learn how to assess the impact of your digital mentoring.

## SUMMARY

Self-reflection of your own mentoring approach and the digital mentoring program you are a part of is important to help you become a more effective digital mentor. By gathering feedback from your learners and thinking critically about how your sessions are running you'll be able to identify what is going well and understand what you could improve.

It's important to make time to celebrate success with your learner. So, if you notice your learner completing an online task more confidently than before, or use their new skills to 'problem-solve' their way through a challenge, be sure to point it out and congratulate them.

Don't forget to recognise your own successes too! For example, you could throw a break-up party after a digital mentoring course or celebrate milestones of mentoring service to your organisation or community.

Measurement or evaluation may already be built into your program. If this is not the case, the next section describes two methods you can use to understand how your sessions are progressing.



## Gathering feedback from learners

Feedback from learners can be used to improve your future mentoring partnerships. The feedback loop on the opposite page shows that feedback is an ongoing process that happens throughout the relationship, not just at the end of a session or course. There are three steps in the cycle:

- STEP 1 Gather feedback:** Seek out comments from your learners
- STEP 2 Implement feedback:** Choose some key actions to change or improve on in your mentoring sessions
- STEP 3 Share and refine changes:** Tell your learners about the changes you've made and tweak your approach if necessary.

### TRY IT!

In this activity you'll consider how to gather feedback from learners during sessions by being attentive and listening to them carefully.

**OPTION 1** Having built a strong relationship from the beginning, you could also talk through the following open-ended questions with your learner.

- What do you most enjoy about our sessions?
- What could/should we do more or less of in our sessions?
- Do you have any suggestions?

**OPTION 2** If you prefer a more structured approach, use the template on the opposite page to:

- Plan how you will gather feedback from your learner i.e. a survey, conversation, feedback form etc.;
- Document the feedback you receive;
- Decide what you will change; and
- Plan how will you report back to your learners.



# Gathering feedback from learners



**ACTIVITY**

## **OPTION 1** Feedback from my learners

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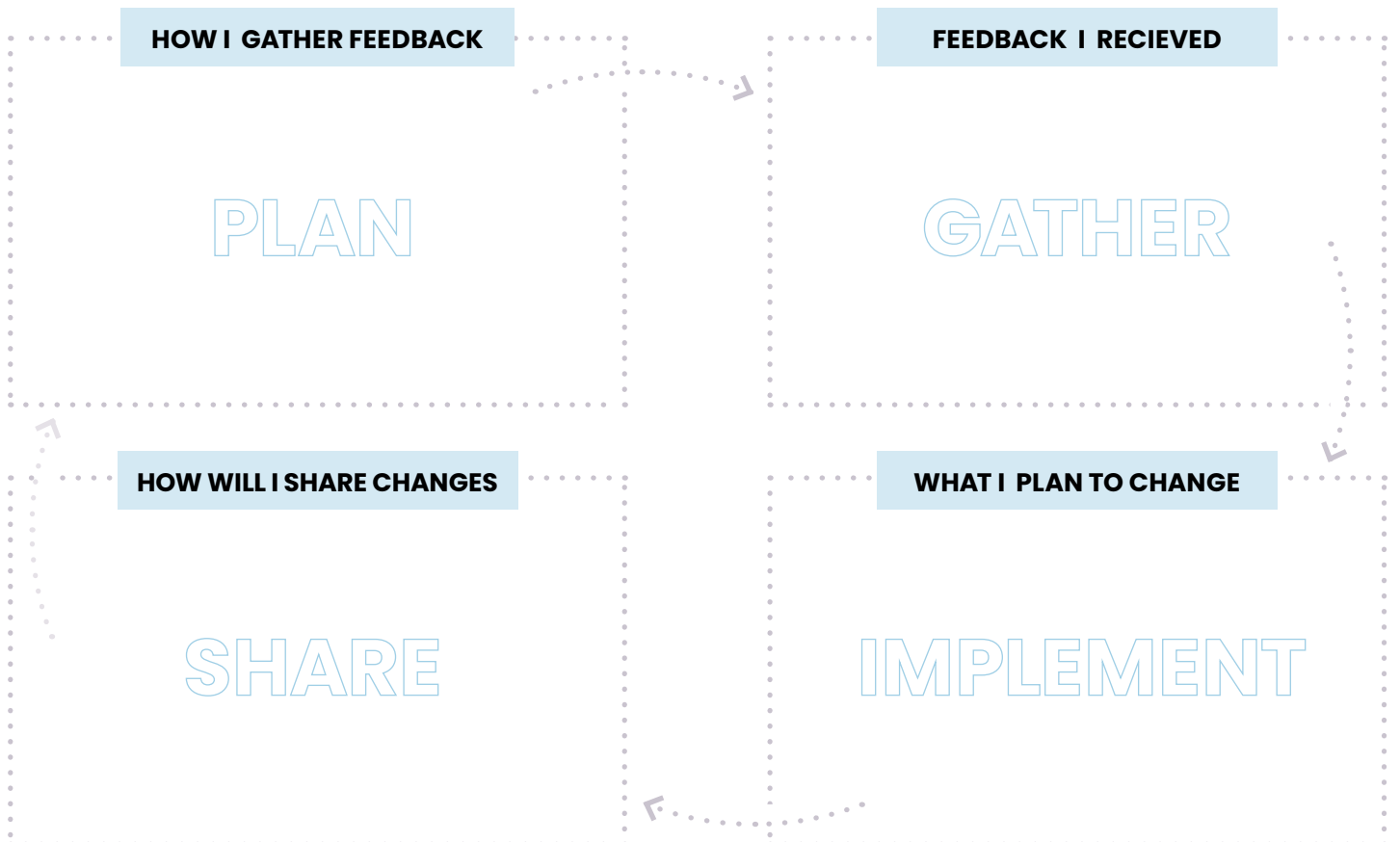
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## **OPTION 2** My Feedback loop





## ACTIVITY

# Assessing the impact of mentoring

Mentors can play a role in assessing the impact of their sessions, programs and partnerships. You can consider the success of your mentoring program, sessions or partnership in these four areas:

**PEOPLE** Participants, facilitators and organisations

**CONTENT** Learning goals, program plans or curriculum

**TECHNOLOGY** Devices, software, platforms and internet connection

**COMMUNITY** How programs interact with and impact the community.

Depending on your organisation and role, you may have more or less input into measuring impact. You may like to ask your supervisor about this to see where you might fit in to the process.

## TRY IT!

This activity asks you to consider the questions below in relation to four perspectives of measuring impact: people, content, technology and community. This impact assessment focuses mainly on outcomes for learners, in which mentors have a key role.

Write your answers to the questions on the next page. You can seek help from others in your organisation if needed, or ask your supervisor to lead a discussion with several mentors.

<b>People</b>	• What do you have in common with your learner?
	• Was the mentoring partnership enjoyable? Why/why not?
	• How did you engage your learner?
<b>Content</b>	• What are the most valuable skills gained by the learner?
	• In what ways were you or your learner surprised by the digital skills that were gained?
	• How did you effectively facilitate the learning?
<b>Technology</b>	• How has the learner's confidence in using technology changed?
	• What new devices, software or platforms have they learned to use?
	• Has the learner been able to replicate skills from this program on other technology?
<b>Community</b>	• How has the learner been able to use new skills in practice?
	• How has this program changed their usual day/week?
	• How has the learner's new digital skills complemented their other activities?



# Assessing the impact of mentoring



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**PEOPLE**

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**CONTENT**

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**TECHNOLOGY**

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**COMMUNITY**

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# From here

We hope this Handbook has provided you with new insights into your digital mentoring journey. Digital mentors like you play a vital role in improving digital inclusion across the country.

Your understanding of digital mentoring and your approach will evolve over time. As your partnerships with your learners grow, you may find it helpful to return to this Handbook to revisit the information and activities as you see fit.

If you're at the beginning of your digital mentoring journey, we encourage you to contact these (or other) organisations to see how you can get involved in your local area.

**REMEMBER** You are not alone in digital mentoring. Several organisations, many of whom have contributed to this Handbook, have further resources for you and your learners on their websites.

## **AUSTRALIAN SENIORS COMPUTER CLUBS ASSOCIATION (ASCCA)**

Representative body for seniors and technology and in Australia

<https://www.ascca.org.au/>

## **BE CONNECTED**

A national seniors digital ability program

<https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/>

## **DIGITAL SPRINGBOARD**

A national digital skills to help people thrive in work and life

<https://www.digitalspringboard.org.au/>

## **GO DIGI**

An initiative of Infoxchange and Australia Post offering digital inclusion resources

<https://www.godigi.org.au/>

## **LEEP**

A non-government organisation focused on digital inclusion programs for the 'one in five' Australians who are not online

<https://leep.ngo/>

## **LIVELY**

An organisation for young job seekers mentoring seniors

<http://lively.org.au/>









This Handbook was developed by the Queensland University of Technology in 2018-19 with support from Australia Post, in close consultation with digital mentors working in community organisations, libraries and homes across Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

To read the full report Digital Mentoring in Australian Communities go to [auspost.com.au/digitalmentoringreport](http://auspost.com.au/digitalmentoringreport)