leep

Digital Mentoring:

A Handbook

What is a digital mentor?

A digital mentor is someone who provides one-on-one support to empower people to use technology and get online. This could mean helping out on a laptop, mobile phone, tablet or computer.

The digital mentoring model allows learners to learn at their own pace and receive tailored support to build digital skills. A digital mentor does not fix issues with hardware and is not an IT professional.

Supporting people to be online is an important task; as we move into a world where technology is increasingly central to everyday life, the effects of being offline are becoming more severe. Digital literacy isn't just about technology- it's a life skill that improves a person's overall wellbeing.

Core qualities

Basic Digital Literacy
A digital mentor should have a good understanding of how to perform basic technology tasks and of basic technology concepts. It is not necessary to be an IT whizz, or know all the answers!

Empathy
A digital mentor must be able to empathise with the learner. It is important never to judge or make assumptions about a learner and to understand how scary technology can be to some. A digital mentor must always be compassionate.

Patience
Patience is key in the digital mentoring journey. Learners might require a lot of repetition in order to learn certain tasks. It is important never to be frustrated, as this discourages the learner. Always use positive reinforcement and work at the pace of the learner.

Start with a conversation

Before starting to use technology with a learner, have a conversation with them to get to know them better. Find out what they are interested in, what goals they might have and what they already know. This will help you build rapport with your learner, plan their learning journey and help motivate them by incorporating their interests into their learning. Doing the intake form with your learner will help facilitate this conversation.

Some important skills

Using appropriate language

- Use simple language
- Avoid too much jargon
- Explain jargon where necessary
- Use short, clear sentences
- Use metaphors that reference a learner's prior knowledge to explain concepts. E.g. "a password is like a key"

Showing, not doing:

- Try using a "hands-off" approach, so the learner is doing the tasks as you guide them
- Remember that the end goal is that learners can do tasks independently
- Never just do a technology task for someone rather than teaching them how to do the task

Common topics

Common tasks you will help out with during a mentoring session include:

- Searching the internet
- Navigating a device
- Setting up online accounts
- Using social media
- Using apps
- Texting and making calls

Boundaries and Privacy

Digital mentors often form a close relationship with their learner. It is important that digital mentors maintain healthy boundaries with the learner and that the privacy of both the mentor and learner is protected.

Never share any passwords! If a learner is prone to forgetting their password, get them to write down a cryptic clue to remind themselves. Eg. "my house number plus middle name with a dollar sign"

Don't share your personal details such as your mobile number, email address or home address.
The learner can contact a staff member if they need anything.

Be friendly and professional with a learner. For learners, the social aspect of digital mentoring can be very important.

Remember you're not a counsellor. Don't give personal advice or get involved with a leaner's personal matters.

If you're concerned for a learner's health or safety, let a staff member know and they can take appropriate action.

If you're feeling uncomfortable or unsafe with a learner, remember you can always leave a session. Report any offensive behaviour to a staff member.

Taking bookings:
Our booking sheets are live Google docs. The link to your program's booking sheet is available on Trello. You can book a mentor in using your device. If it is a smart device this might mean you have to download the sheets app. If you are unable to make a booking, please make sure to call us on 4721 1866 to book the learner in.

Doing weekly forms:
The new learner form must be done the first time a new learner attends a session. Please ask them if they have attended a program before to ensure they haven't already completed one. We collect this data for reporting purposes (all information is anonymous when reported).   Further instructions can be found here.

The session record form must be completed every time you support a learner. This helps us track progress and measure the impact of our programs. Further instructions can be found here.

Links you will need to access:
Intake form (for each new learner): leep.ngo/newlearner
Session record (after each session) : leep.ngo/session

Common Challenges

You're not sure how to do something
As a digital mentor, you're not required to know everything! Sometimes a learner might ask you about something you've never done, or there might be a tricky task they're confused about.

Suggestion:
Often the easiest way is to simply Google how to do the task. It's also sometimes best to just figure it out by playing with the device to find the solution, and then going back and showing the learner once you've learnt yourself. If there are other mentors around, you could also ask them for help. Remember sessions are only for **basic** digital literacy support.

Requests for expert advice
Sometimes people ask digital mentors for help that falls outside the expertise of the role. This could include asking what device or plan to purchase, how to fix hardware, or generating content for them.

Suggestion:
It is best to remind a learner that you can't provide expert advice. Where possible, refer a learner on to a place where they can receive appropriate support. For example, if a learner asks for help creating a CV, you could help them learn to use Word, but if they need support with what to put in the document, they could be advised to visit an employment agency.
Often learners ask what to buy. Instead of giving advice, prepare your learner for a discussion they might have with a salesperson at a shop like JB Hi Fi. Together make a list of needs and questions they could take into the shop with them.

Keeping focus
Technology is a big subject! Often learners have lots of questions and answering one question can create three more.

Suggestion:
If a learner is losing focus, try and redirect them to the task at hand. Tell them that you will eventually get to all their questions, but that learning a skill is the priority. Sometimes having a quick break can help a learner to refocus. It's important to stay on task and get in quality learning rather than answering lots of little questions.

Keeping time boundaries
It can be hard to end a session on time. Some learners in particular might be more prone to taking up extra time.

Suggestion:
Tell a learner how much time they have at the beginning of a session, and start wrapping up 10 minutes early because the learner will usually start asking questions.
If this is an issue that persists, nominate a mentor or staff member (if your program is in a common area) to call the time at the end of a session to move learners on. If you are not in a common area, you could set an alarm to sound at the end of the session.

Managing frustration
Occasionally learners get frustrated in sessions, especially if they find a task difficult.

Suggestion:
Remember that the frustration is usually at the technology, not at you. One quick fix is to take a quick break and have a cup of tea. Try and manage expectations if you think a task might be too hard for a learner's current understanding and break down complex tasks into smaller steps. Often validating someone's frustration is effective in helping them feel better; be empathetic and express your understanding that the task is difficult or that they are upset.
If a learner is aggressive or overly frustrated, please refer to the guidelines in the boundaries and privacy section above.

Leep NGO

Position: Outreach Digital Mentor

Leep enables people to use technology in an increasingly digital world. We support all people to build digital skills and confidence, to close the digital divide and reduce social and economic exclusion through one-on-one digital mentoring.

Work Health & Safety

Leep NGO is committed to Work Health and Safety (WHS) practices which reduce risk, prevent injuries and promote work satisfaction. Leep NGO strives to provide all staff, clients, volunteers, and board members with a safe and healthy environment.

All volunteers are responsible for identifying any WHS issues. These issues must be reported to the WHS Representative or your supervisor who will then undertake appropriate action.

Position Overview

The Outreach Digital Mentors voluntarily share their digital skills and knowledge with community members at an outreach location. As we work with local partners, our outreach programs take place at various venues, such as neighbourhood centres, community organisations, retirement villages, cafes, halls and libraries.

In this role, you will provide learners with one-on-one support to improve their technology skills. This may include support on a mobile phone, tablet or laptop.

The minimum availability required is 2-3 hours a week, depending on the outreach program assigned, and with some flexibility required to attend occasional team meetings (online options included) or relevant events.

The volunteer is welcome to commit more hours than the minimum 2-3 hour requirement. The position requires a 3-6 month commitment.

Responsibilities/Tasks

- Set up and pack down of learning space if required (depending on program)
- Complete an online *'New Learner' form* for learners who are participating in the program for the first time.
- Provide digital mentoring according to the learners' individual needs, using your skills and knowledge and with the support of resources such as Google and other digital mentors.
- Complete a '*Session Record'* after each digital mentoring session.
- Handle requests for information and follow up with your Team Leader or appropriate staff member(s)
- Encourage an inclusive community environment

- Participate in team meetings and identified group training sessions
- Report any hazards or incidents to a staff member immediately and complete a hazard/incident report form
- Assist with other appropriate and relevant tasks as negotiated

Required Skills, Knowledge and Qualifications

Skills:
- Patience
- Verbal and written communication skills
- Good interpersonal skills and ability to work as part of a team
- Basic-intermediate computer skills

Knowledge:
- Willingness to learn about digital inclusion and the community services sector

Qualifications:
- No formal qualifications are required

Other:
- Reliability and ability to manage time effectively
- Confidentiality and respect for others

Mandatory Requirements

- Must be over 18 years of age
- Must be able to travel to and from the outreach location in Western Sydney.
- Must undergo a National Criminal Records Check

Talk to us
For further information

Leep NGO

Phone: 4721 1866
Email: digimentor@leep.ngo