

Instructions for interviewing your mentor

Please read this document fully before you begin your interview journey!

This interview is intended to build a personal and professional connection between you and your mentor. Your goal as a mentee is to allow your mentor to provide you with information that would help you to more accurately visualize their career story.

The information captured through the interview session with your mentor will also be used to build the centralized “*Exploring Science*” database that allows users to visualize and sort through the career trajectories of members of the STEM community. The goal of the *Exploring Science* database is to capture both the professional and personal experiences that shaped a person’s journey. It will showcase information beyond what you can find in a CV or resume and include serendipitous moments that influenced them. The goal of this project is to merge the professional side of your mentor with their non-professional experiences to build a whole view of their career story.

Think about your mentor as a character in a movie or book – your goal is to understand their intentions and mindset behind the steps they took. You are helping build this career trajectory to provide mentorship for other individuals in the STEM community. Your goal is to highlight the importance of an all-inclusive and accurate look at the career stories of mentors in the STEM field.

Before the interview

1- Ask your mentor to send you their resume or CV with the following info:

- Education (starting from elementary school onwards)
 - Date range [YYYY-YYYY]
 - Where they completed each degree
- Work experiences (Any positions held throughout their training and career thereafter, including paid roles and unpaid roles that they deem important e.g. voluntary leadership roles)
 - Date range [YYYY-YYYY]
 - Company/organization
 - job title
 - One sentence summary of the position entailed

2- Book the interview. You will likely need 45 min to do it so make sure you go into the session prepared (review this document in advance). Take a lot of notes during the interview, which you can later refer to when you fill out the [questionnaire spreadsheet](#) after the interview. You may also ask your mentor whether they would be comfortable with the conversation being audio recorded (if so, you can use your phone’s audio recording ability). Note that this recording will be used to accurately transcribe the information shared with you and will not be shared publicly or with anyone outside of AtaS.

3- After the interview, input your answers collected onto the [questionnaire spreadsheet](#) (create a copy of the spreadsheet under File to input your answers).

During the interview

Now, you should already have the basic information about your mentor's professional trajectory (when and where they did their training and any positions they took). The goal of this interview is to fill in the information that one can't get from reading a resume. Think of it as colouring in between the lines of the picture their resume information has made.

We have a set of questions that are intended to prompt your mentor to reflect on their time in elementary school, high school, and so on. The point of these questions is to guide your mentor on a self-reflective journey to identify the experiences that shaped their professional identity.

Review the career stages

Review the list of education/ work positions your mentor sent you in advance of the interview and ask your mentor if any additional positions are missing / they would like to add.

Make sure you have the necessary information you need for each:

- Date: [MM/YYYY - MM/YYYY]
- Geographical location
- Institution (if applicable)
- Title of degree or work position
- One sentence summary of their experience in this stage

Interview questions

Use the information your mentor provided you in terms of their formal education and work experience – each of these is a stage in their trajectory (ex. high school, undergrad, graduate school, post-grad, work positions, etc). Move chronologically between the stages and for each stage, ask them the following questions:

1. What was your dream job at the start of this stage and end of this stage?
2. How certain were you about your career choice at this stage of your life? (0-100% sure)
3. What is one message you would tell your past self at this stage?
4. What are the experiences at this stage of your life that you think most influenced your trajectory? (e.g. earning a degree, failing a test, an impactful coffee chat, a hobby, etc)
Limit to 3 experiences per career stage.

For each of these experiences, ask them these 4 questions:

a. How impactful was this experience toward your professional career?

- 1 = It did not contribute to my current profession
- 3 = I pursued my professional career because of of this

b. How prominent is this experience in your life?

- 1 = I rarely think about this event or engage in this hobby anymore, etc.
- 3 = I always think about this event or regularly engage in this hobby til this day, etc.

c. How serendipitous was this event?

1 = I intentionally sought out this event/mentor, etc.

3 = I never planned or expected to attend this event/meet this person, etc.

d. Degree to which this pivoted your professional career

1 = This did not pivot my career at all

3 = This experience completely shifted my career to a new direction (ex. a new field, a new type of position, etc)

Use these questions below to help trigger their memories. Feel free to come up with more of your own questions.

- a. Were there any classes that were particularly memorable (for good or bad reasons)?
- b. Were you a part of any clubs or groups?
- c. Did you have any hobbies?
- d. What was your favorite textbook and what was a textbook you were afraid of?
- e. What is one book you remember reading at this stage?
- f. Do you remember any key mentors at this stage? E.g. teachers, parents, friends, etc.
- g. What music did you listen to every day?
- h. What was your creative outlet?
- i. What was the most memorable trip you took?
- j. Did you volunteer anywhere?
- k. Were there any difficult events or challenges you faced in this stage?
- l. Do you remember any relationships (friends, colleagues, etc) that were important at this stage or beyond?

Additional questions to help in case the interview gets stuck!

- If you could look back through the entire trajectory we reviewed, where can you identify a surprising turn? What happened at what point that you did not expect?
- Name the jobs you wanted to have since you can remember.
- What's the name of your favorite book? It does not have to be related to your current profession.

Identify the most impactful events

At the end of the interview, ask them to identify the top 5 experiences they would like to highlight in their career.

After the interview

Now it's time to distill what you learned from the conversation and fill it into the [questionnaire spreadsheet](#) provided. There are 2 sheets in the spreadsheet (select using the tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet):

Sheet 1: Career stages in your mentor's life.

Stage no.	Stage title	Start date [MM/YYYY]	End date [MM/YYYY]	Geographical Location	Institution (if applicable)	One sentence summary of the experience	Dream job at the start	Dream job at the end	Certainty about career decision	Message to past self	Additional Notes

This table captures the resume-type information – the “traditional” information about your mentor's education, training, and work experience. Each of these experiences is a “stage” in their professional career and is numbered in this table chronologically. You should have these stages already identified based on your mentor's resume or CV before the interview happens, and the interview will help you fill in any blanks that are missing. Here's the info you will need:

- Date: [MM/YYYY - MM/YYYY]
- Geographical location
- Institution (if applicable)
- Title of degree or work position
- One sentence summary of their experience in this stage
- Their dream job at the start and end of that stage
- How certain they were of this dream job choice
- What message they would give to their past self at this stage

Sheet 2: Experiences that influenced your mentor's trajectory.

Stage no. (if experience was during a career stage)	Category	Start date [YYYY]	End date [YYYY]	One sentence description	Impact	Prominence	Serendipity	Degree of Pivot

This table is where you will capture the experiences that have shaped your mentor's trajectory. As you guide your mentor during their interview, you are trying to prompt them to reflect on what experiences shaped the route they took. We ask that you summarize these experiences by providing the following info for each:

- Stage number: map the experience back to the career stages you listed in Sheet 1 – did this happen in one of those stages? Some experiences may happen between stages as well and for those you can denote “between stage 1 and 2”, as an example.
- The category of the experience (see dropdown list)
- Start and end date (year)
- One sentence description of the experience
- Their rating of 4 key metrics:

- Impact of experience on their professional career (scale of 1 to 3)
- Prominence of the experience in their life (scale of 1 to 3)
- How serendipitous the experience was (scale of 1 to 3)
- Degree to which this experience pivoted their career choice (scale of 1 to 3)
- The top 5 experiences of their career — highlight the row with the experience info in yellow

Here's a [filled out spreadsheet](#) as an example.