

# BestPrep's eMentors Guiding Question Topics<sup>®</sup>

Guiding Question topics provide the content for the student-mentor weekly message exchanges. The prompts provide guidance, direction and the learning behind each message exchange. As with all relationships, students are also encouraged to write on topics beyond the main prompt; students are encouraged to write about hobbies, interests and how they spend their time.

## Educator Instructions

1. Select seven guiding question topics for the student using categories and questions on the following pages.
2. Complete the grid below, place in order of when messages will be sent to mentors by students.
3. Send list to your BestPrep staff member. Copy/pasting the grid into an email message will work.

	Date message will be sent by students to mentors <i>Example: Tuesday, 9/8/15</i>	Category <i>Example: Career Skills or CS</i>	Guiding Question Title One per week/box <i>Example: Workplace Communications</i>
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

## Main Categories and Topics

Shown below are the main categories that guiding question topics fall within, as well as key words or topics alluding to the question contents.

Press ctrl and click on a category title to jump to the respective section to review all topics available. You are encouraged to select from multiple categories.

<a href="#"><u>Introduction (I)</u></a> <i>Intro, high level career, post-secondary experience</i> <i>*BestPrep recommends 1-2 questions</i>	<a href="#"><u>Choose Your Attitude (CYA)</u></a> <i>Teamwork, problem solving, creativity, positive attitude</i>	<a href="#"><u>Career Exploration (CE)</u></a> <i>Resumes, corporate culture, interview advice, networking</i>
<a href="#"><u>Career Skills (CS)</u></a> <i>Workplace communications, managing time, attendance</i>	<a href="#"><u>Influences Global &amp; Local (IGL)</u></a> <i>Role models, workplace diversity, travel experience, volunteering</i>	<a href="#"><u>Academic Prep (AP)</u></a> <i>Study skills, reading, life-long learning</i>
<a href="#"><u>College Preparation (CP)</u></a> <i>College visits, paying for school, college experience</i>	<a href="#"><u>Money Management / Financial Literacy (MM)</u></a> <i>Sources of money, saving habits, credit and debt</i>	<a href="#"><u>Business (B)</u></a> <i>Marketing, CPA, project management</i>
<a href="#"><u>Economics (E)</u></a> <i>Inflation, monetary policy, international trade</i>	<a href="#"><u>Science and Technology (ST)</u></a> <i>Current issues, careers, technology</i>	<a href="#"><u>Math (M)</u></a> <i>math used at work, at home, displaying data</i>
<a href="#"><u>Healthcare / Wellness (HW)</u></a> <i>Healthy lifestyle, careers, healthcare in the future</i>	<a href="#"><u>Customize a Guiding Topic</u></a> <i>Don't see a guiding topic that works? Create your own.</i>	

## Introduction

**Introduction:** Introduce yourself by giving your name, gender, grade, classes in school, and any teams or extracurricular activities you are part of. Share a few of your favorites, such as favorite subject, or how you spend your time. Ask your mentor about their job, what their daily tasks include, and how long they have been in the job. You can also ask your mentor about their family or hobbies.

**Introductions with College/Career Experience:** Introduce yourself by sharing your name, gender, grade, classes in school, extracurricular activities, work, volunteer experiences, etc. Share a few of your favorites, such as favorite subject or how you spend your time. Ask your mentor about their job, what their daily tasks include, and what they like best/least about their jobs. In addition, ask mentors about their education and training after high school. Looking back, what did the eMentor like most about these experiences and what do they wish they could have changed about the high school or college choices and experiences? You can also ask about their family or hobbies.

## Choose Your Attitude

**Getting Along With Other Students, Co-Workers & Impressing Your Supervisor:** Write about your experience getting along with students, co-workers and supervisors. Is it easy or hard for you? Explain any reasons you think your experiences were positive or negative. Ask your mentor to describe what they think are the best strategies for getting along with co-workers and impressing the boss. Have them share examples of situations in which they have dealt with both helpful and problematic co-workers and supervisors.

**Growth Mindset:** According to renowned psychologist Carol Dweck, a growth mindset is the belief that intelligence can be developed. This means you can gain new knowledge and skills through hard work, perseverance, and help from others when needed. It means you see failure as an opportunity to grow and you aren't afraid to try new things. Do you think you have a growth mindset? What are some ways you can practice having a growth mindset?

**Conflict Resolution:** Describe a conflict you have encountered with a classmate, family member, coworker, or friend. How was the conflict resolved? Ask your mentor how they resolve conflicts at work. How often do conflicts arise?

**Teamwork:** Tell your mentor about the teams you are on. Explain to your mentor how working with others on an assigned class project is like a team. Ask your mentor how often their job requires working in a team, and how often the mentor gets to choose who they work with. What does your mentor do when they can't solve a problem themselves? In what ways does your mentor collaborate with peers or adults to solve a problem or achieve a goal? How have you done this in your life?

**Overcoming Mistakes:** Tell your mentor about a mistake you have made. [Some examples could include cheating on a test, getting a bad grade in a class, lying to a friend, making someone feel bad, getting in a fight with someone, etc.] Tell your mentor how the situation was resolved. Is there anything positive that came out of the situation? Ask your mentor for strategies to overcome the mistakes and how to move on from a bad situation.

**Problem Solving:** How do you solve a problem? Identify some of the problems you have to solve at school. Ask your mentor what problems they have to solve at work. How do they decide what to do? Does your mentor break a big problem into small pieces? Are company policies written about problem solving? Is there anyone that your mentor reaches out to when a problem arises?

[Return to First Page](#)

**Ethics:** There are times when all people are put into situations where a decision needs to be made. Making a conscientious ethical decision can be difficult. Describe a situation where you were forced to make an ethical choice, how you made the decision and how you knew it was correct. If you haven't been in this situation, you may want to share with your mentor a situation you witnessed at school or work. An example could be someone cheating on a test, skipping classes, bullying, or stealing. Tell your mentor how you felt about the situation. Ask your mentor to share a time when they saw a colleague make an ethical decision, and another time when someone made an unethical decision and the results of both.

**Your Best Self:** What is the best version of yourself? Consider what you say, how you treat others, how you use your time, and the goals you wish to achieve in all areas of your life. What are some steps you could take to be the best version of yourself every day? Ask your mentor to describe their best self and how they work to live this version each day.

**Optimism and Positive Attitude:** Share with your mentor your overall outlook on life. Do you consider yourself to have a positive attitude? What makes you have a negative attitude? Are you optimistic about your future education and career? Ask your mentor about their outlook on life? What is it like to work with someone who has a negative attitude? How has their attitude affected their life and career?

**Innovation and Creativity:** Share with your mentor a time when you used innovation and creativity to solve a problem. What was the problem? In what innovative way did you solve the problem? How successful was your solution? Ask your mentor how they or the company used innovation and creativity to solve problems and stay ahead of trends? What are the risks and benefits to creativity?

**Asking for Help:** Share with your mentor a time when you may or may not have asked for help. How did you learn from that experience? How do you know when you need to ask for help? Do you ever feel nervous or ashamed about asking for help? Ask your mentor how they seek guidance from their coworkers and supervisor when needed. Do they ever feel apprehensive about asking for help? How do they know when to problem solve independently vs. asking for help?

**Responsible Decision Making:** We make hundreds of decisions a day. Some are easy and some are difficult. Some have negligible outcomes, and some make a huge impact. Being faced with a difficult decision is not easy. Describe a time when you were faced with a difficult decision. How did you handle it? Would you handle it differently in the future? How do you make a responsible decision? Ask your mentor to share how they make responsible decisions.

**Finding Your Purpose:** Finding your purpose creates a sense of meaning in your life. You know what you love to do, what you are good at, and how you can contribute to the world. What do you think your purpose is? What is a cause you are passionate about? Do you think there is a way to align your purpose with your future career goals? Ask your mentor what their purpose in life is or a cause they are passionate about. Are they able to directly affect this cause through their work and/or personal life?

## Career Exploration

**Resume/Cover Letter Review:** Ask your mentor which skills they believe are necessary for various jobs, including their own job. Upload your resume/cover letter to Google Drive. Copy the shareable link to your resume/coverletter from Google Docs. Ask your mentor for suggestions to improve your resume/cover letter. Please make sure you remove all personal information from your resume/cover letter (email, phone number, address...).

[Return to First Page](#)

**Interviewing Skills:** Share any interview experience you have had (job interviews, college interviews, mock interviews, etc.) What skills are important when interviewing (both verbal and non-verbal)? Ask your mentor about ways to improve your interviewing skills, and what employers look for in an interview.

**Interview Advice:** Share with your mentor that we are learning about employment strategies in class. Describe the types of interviews you have experienced so far and share the biggest lessons you have learned. Ask your mentor about their interview experiences.

**Where Do You See Yourself in 5-10 Years?** A common interview question you will be asked is, “Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?” Take some time to think about your future and write a response to the question. 5-10 years seems like quite a long way away. However, the steps you take today can put in motion your future aspirations. What near-term opportunities are available to set the stage for your long-term career goals? Ask your mentor to help brainstorm some ideas to achieve your goals.

**Elevator Speech:** As you prepare for college and/or the workforce, developing an elevator speech becomes important. An elevator speech should highlight a person’s best attributes and/or personal goals during the time of an elevator ride (30 seconds, 50-100 words). An elevator speech could also be stating clearly what type of job you are looking for. Prepare and send your elevator speech to your mentor and ask for feedback. Ask your mentor if she/he has given an elevator speech or has one ready, and what that might include?

**Goal Setting:** Set goals and action steps for the final trimester of the school year. Message your goals to your mentor. Statistics show that when goals are written down they are more likely to be achieved. Ask your mentor about goals they have set and about the plans they have set in place to accomplish them.

**Corporate Culture:** What kind of company culture do you think you want to work in, and why? (Some examples include: the ability to work from home, fun work environment, more structured workspace, etc.). Ask your mentor about their experience with different corporate cultures. What is their current corporate culture like? What corporate culture an important factor in choosing a job? How did they know it was the right fit?

**Workplace Values:** Share what is important to you in a work environment now, and what type of work environment you would like in the future. How important are things like the company’s mission, the option of flex-time or telecommuting, and the company’s philanthropic initiatives? How important are personal values such as job satisfaction, salary, benefits, etc.? Ask your mentor what they value in a work environment, and what criteria are important to consider as you enter the workforce.

**Job Search:** Ask for suggestions on what you can do between now and graduating from high school/college that will help you secure a permanent fulltime position. What kinds of things would separate you from other candidates when applying for a job? When thinking about a job, what kinds of skills are employers looking for? Did your mentor do anything that helped them stand out?

**Deciding on a Career:** Ask your mentor how they chose their current career. Have they ever thought about doing something else? What factors go into deciding whether or not to pursue a career? What does it mean to have a passion for something? Tell your mentor about the things you like to do. Can they think of a career that fits well with those things? Does it surprise you?

**Strengths and Weaknesses:** Share with your mentor what your top three strengths are. If you have a job, how do these help you in your work? What are three of your weaknesses? How are you working to improve upon them? Ask your mentor about their strengths and weaknesses. How does that knowledge help them in their career? What is a weakness they have improved? How did they do it?

[Return to First Page](#)

**Networking:** Share with your mentor what you know about networking. Who would you consider to be in your network? Has anyone you know helped you or a family member get a job? Ask your mentor about their network. How do they meet new people (expand their network)? How do they use their network to advance their career? What methods of networking do they use (networking events, LinkedIn, face-to-face meetings, etc.)? What advice can they give you about starting to build your network?

**Work/Life Balance:** Ask your mentor about their work/life balance. What are their typical working hours? Can they work from home? Do they travel for work? Tell your mentor about your extracurricular activities or how you spend your time outside of school. Share the amount of time that you spend with your family and friends. How do they make time to be with their family and friends? Ask what is most important to them outside of work and if they can share their tips on how to achieve a healthy work/life balance.

## Career Skills

**Workplace Etiquette (Behaviors & Social Skills):** Tell your mentor what you think are the top three best and worst workplace behaviors and social skills. Describe any experiences you've had related to these at work, in school, or in the community. Your mentor will also list their top three best and worst workplace behaviors and social skills, along with examples from their professional experience. Mentors will describe any policies that exist at their job regarding workplace etiquette, and if consequences are in place if employees don't comply with these policies.

**Workplace Communications:** Write about how you communicate with your friends, parents, and teachers. Do you have social media? What do you use it for? Do you use this technology for school assignments or to communicate with your teacher? Ask your mentor about using email, phone and other methods of communicating with their co-workers. Also ask about how many emails, phone calls, and text messages your mentor receives in a day, and how quickly they respond to messages, etc. Do they want to implement any other forms of communication? If so, what/why?

**Emotional Intelligence:** You may have heard about IQ (Intelligence Quotient), but have you heard about EQ (Emotional Quotient)? Your EQ is just as important as your IQ in terms of skills employers are looking for in a potential employee. Having a high EQ means you are self-aware, able to self-regulate your emotions, are highly motivated, can practice empathy, and have high social skills. Do you think you have a high EQ? Do you think it's fair for employers to look at only one or the other (EQ vs. IQ)? Ask your mentor how they see EQ impact the workforce.

**Attendance and Punctuality:** Discuss your school's attendance policy, including what time school starts and ends and what happens if you are absent, skip class, or are tardy. Share how many classes you go to, whether or not you have a study hall, etc. Ask about your mentor's vacation, sick, and flex time. What types of paid time off are offered? Ask if there are strict start/end times or how flexible a daily schedule could be.

**Taking a Risk:** Taking a risk to achieve a goal requires courage to face the fear of uncertainty. No matter the outcome, we grow through the process and become more resilient and confident. Better yet, building those skills helps in taking more risks and improves the chances of achieving future goals. Have you taken a risk? If yes, describe the situation and outcome to your mentor. If you haven't taken a risk, describe to your mentor an area in your life where you would like to take a risk. Ask your mentor if they have ever taken a risk at work. What was the outcome? How did it make them feel?

[Return to First Page](#)

**Managing Time:** Discuss how many hours you spend doing schoolwork, attending classes, participating in extracurriculars, and hanging out with friends. Discuss the importance of managing time, using calendars, and setting priorities. Ask your mentor how they schedule their time. How do they find balance between working, family time, hobbies, etc. Ask about how often meetings are scheduled, how long they are, etc. Ask for tips on managing your time.

**Presentation Skills:** Tell your mentor about the public speaking experience you have (school projects, speech class, etc.). What skills are important in public speaking and making presentations? Share a few skills you are good at, and ask your mentor what skills they think are important. Also ask your mentor about presentations they make at work, and how they prepare for those presentations. What visual aids do they use in presentations?

**Social Media for Business:** Tell your mentor about what social media you use. Do you use it for networking? What social media does your mentor use? How has their use of social media changed over time? Do they use it to network and find new job opportunities through LinkedIn or other professional social media sites? What do you and they see as the benefits and drawbacks of social media? Do you both think social media can provide positive change in communities and the world? If so, in what way?

**Self-Reflection:** Self-reflection gives the brain the opportunity to pause, sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible outcomes, and create meaning. Self-reflection allows you to look back on a scenario and analyze how it went. What went well? How could you improve? Taking the time to pause and reflect allows you the opportunity to change and grow in different scenarios. Pick a scenario you would like to self-reflect on and describe the experience to your mentor. Practice self-reflection by answering the following questions: What did I say, do, and feel during this experience? What options do I see for the next time I encounter this situation? How can I grow from this experience? Ask your mentor if they have any advice regarding your scenario and how they implement self-reflection.

## Influences Global and Local

**Role Models:** Many of us have people in our life who are influential in our decisions. Share who two of your role models are. These could be other mentors, coaches, family members, athletes, teachers, etc. Share how and why these people have had a positive impact on your life and how you have changed since recognizing this person as a role model. Ask your mentor about the role models they have had and if those role models have changed throughout their life. Tell your mentor what you are doing to be a positive role model in someone else's life.

**Leadership Roles:** Discuss any leadership roles you have taken on, or those you have seen your peers take on. This could include being a captain of a team, being a group leader, being a member of a club, or any other leadership role. If you have not been a leader, you are encouraged to share about other ways you have worked with your friends, classmates, or family to get something done. What skills do you see are needed to be a good leader? Ask your mentor about leadership roles they have had and how it has benefited him/her. What skills does your mentor think are needed to be a good leader?

[Return to First Page](#)

**Volunteerism:** Tell your mentor about any current volunteer activities you participate in or have been a part of in the past. This could include volunteering at a community organization, a church, or helping a neighbor. If you don't currently volunteer, share with your mentor an organization/place you would like to volunteer with or a volunteer activity you would like to pursue. Do you think it is important to volunteer? Why or why not? What skills can you offer others through volunteering? Ask your mentor where they have volunteered, and what they liked about it.

**Workplace Diversity:** Discuss diversity within your school (race, religion, culture, etc). Share how you have learned to get along with students unlike yourself. Ask your mentor about diversity in their workplace and how they interact with people from other backgrounds. What impact has working with people from other backgrounds had on their life?

**International or Cultural Experiences:** Tell your mentor about any international or cultural experiences you've had. This could include if you have traveled or lived outside of the US; languages other than English that you speak or are learning, cultures you are a part of, etc. If you don't have your own experience to discuss, share about a place other than the United States you have learned about, and where you would like to travel to. Ask your mentor about any international or cultural experiences they have experienced. Ask your mentor about how their position relates to an international workforce and how their job is affected by that.

**Working in a Global World:** Share with your mentor any experiences you have working with individuals from different cultures or your experiences being in a different culture. What did you notice about the culture's differences? Ask your mentor about the experiences they have had working with people from different cultures. Have they worked in different parts of the world? Do they work with people located in or from different parts of the world? What do they notice about the cultural differences? How do they successfully work with people of a different background?

**Intercultural Competency:** Share a time when you worked with individuals from a different cultural background than yourself. What did you learn from working with the group? What differences did you notice about the culture? Were there challenges? Did you gain an appreciation for the culture? Ask your mentor to share a similar experience. What did they learn from the experience? How do they apply that experience to their workplace and life?

## Academic Prep

**Academic Skills Needed for Careers:** Share with your mentor the skills you are learning in school that you think will be important for your future career (business, reading, writing, math, science)? What skills do you think will not be important? Ask your mentor about the skills they learned in school that were helpful to him/her in their career. What skills do they wish they had developed further while in school? What skills did they not expect to need?

**Study Skills/Note Taking:** Tell your mentor ways that you study and prep for tests. Do you take notes in class and review them? What strategies do you have for note taking? Explain how you learn best; reading, listening, doing something, working with others (team projects), etc. Ask your mentor for tips on studying, note taking, and how to prepare for upcoming tests. How do they effectively take notes during meetings? What helps them think through things?

**Lifelong Learning:** Share with your mentor what you expect to learn once you graduate college and start a career. Do you think you will continue to keep learning? Will you keep taking classes, reading books, writing, practicing skills? Ask your mentor what they are learning now that they are done with college. Do they have to keep learning for their job? What tools are they using to keep learning? Are they taking classes or learning on the job? Would they consider themselves to be a 'lifelong learner'? What other interests have they developed since school (appreciation of poetry, love for geography)?

[Return to First Page](#)

**Academic Motivation:** Share with your mentor your attitude towards school? Do you like school? What motivates you to stay in school? What motivates you to do well in school? Ask your mentor what their attitude towards school was? How did their attitude towards education change after they started in a full-time position? What kind of student were they in school? What motivated him/her to finish school?

**Perseverance:** Tell your mentor about a time when you completed a goal even though you were faced with challenges along the way (e.g.: writing a tough paper). How did you persevere to overcome any obstacles? Did you ask for guidance along the way? Ask your mentor how they practice perseverance in their job. What advice can they give you to stick to your goals and overcome obstacles?

## College Preparation

**Academic Experience:** Share with your mentor the classes you enjoy most in high school. What majors are you interested in studying in college? Ask your mentor what their major was in college. Did they have any minors? How did they choose what to study? How does their academic education in college help him/her in their current job? Would they have done anything differently? What level of school did they get through (undergrad, grad degree, PhD, etc.)?

**College Life/Experience:** Share with your mentor what you are looking forward to doing in college. Ask your mentor about their college experience. What types of activities were they involved in outside of classes (student groups: greek life, professional organizations, student gov't, etc, volunteer opportunities, and internships)? What activities helped him/her most prepare for their career post-college?

**Post Secondary Visits:** Tell your mentor what criteria are important to you when looking for a post-secondary education. Examples: big/small, out of state/local, public/private, two/four year, degrees offered, cost, etc. What criteria are important to your family? Ask your mentor how they chose where to enroll for their post-secondary education.

**Student - College Life/Paying for Post-Secondary Education:** Tell your mentor about your post-secondary education plan. This could include if you plan to attend or not, then state why you made that decision.

If you do plan to go: Write to your mentor about any concerns or excitement about moving, making the transition, paying for post-secondary schooling. Ask for advice that will make the transition easier, methods for saving for college now. Ask if your mentor has suggestions for ways you can find scholarships or grants to help pay for college. Ask your mentor how they paid for their post-secondary schooling.

If you don't plan to go: Tell your mentor about the decision you have made and how you envision life without attending school. Students spend 6-8 hours a day in school. After graduation, how you will spend your time?

## Money Management/Financial Literacy

**Sources of Money:** Respond to the question of “What is the purpose of money?” or “What does money mean to you?” Explain what your money source(s) are. Is most of your money earned or given to you? This could include jobs, babysitting, birthdays, holidays, or allowances. Who typically gives you money? What needs are currently met by your parents which may not be after graduation? Also, make a list of ways you can earn money. What are all the different ways your mentor has earned money (current job, part time jobs, allowances, freelance work, inheritance)?

[Return to First Page](#)



**Money Management:** Write about how you earn money and ways in which you save money and control your finances/spending. Talk about how having an income affects your earnings, and how this determines your spending habits. Write about if you track any of your spending. State if you write down how much you've spent, or record any charges on your debit or credit cards, etc. Does your mentor manage money well? Have their money management habits changed over time? Do they have any tips for you?

**Budgeting:** Keep a record of how you spent your money for one or more week and report the results to your mentor. After the week is over, evaluate how you spent your money. Share with your mentor what trends you saw. How much did you spend on food, music/games, entertainment, clothing, or gasoline. Did you put any money in your savings account? Do you have any financial goals? Are you using a budget to save money? How do your budgeting and spending habits reflect that goal? What does your mentor's budget look like? Has that changed much over time? Did they have a budget when younger?

**Spending & Saving Habits:** Describe your spending and saving habits to your mentor. What do you like to spend money on? How do you make spending decisions? Do you do research before you buy something or do you buy on impulse? How do you determine what you need versus what you want when making a purchasing decision? Do you save money? If so, for what? How do you monitor your spending and saving? Does your mentor save money? If so, what percent? Have they saved more as they've grown older? Why/why not?

**Credit:** What do you know about credit cards? Are you planning on getting one? Explain to your mentor how you think credit cards work and whether they are good, bad, or both. Of course, credit (getting a loan from a bank and agreeing to pay it back later) is more than just credit cards. Ask your mentor how they use credit. Do they use a credit card or a debit card? When they buy something on credit, how do they determine what the real or added cost of the product is? What does it mean to have "good credit"?

**Future Planning & Time Value of Money:** Discuss your future plans and how you would like to spend your life, such as if you plan to get married, have children, where you would like to live (what part of the country, urban/suburban, rural), when you would like to be financially independent (retire), and generally what is important to you. Some items to consider include: income level you can expect to earn, future education goals, living set-up (married, live alone, have a roommate), vacationing habits, etc. How have your mentor's plans influenced their financial decisions?

## Business

**Marketing:** Discuss ways in which marketing affects the choices you make. Describe brand identity and how that impacts your choices. Your mentor will describe to you the customers they serve within their organization and successful advertising techniques. Ask them to write about competitors, pricing and promotions.

**Accounting/Finance:** Write about how you earn money and ways in which you save money and control your finances/spending. Ask your mentor about how their company manages their budgets and finances. How do other parts of the business (such as Marketing, Human Resources, Operations, etc) interact with the financial side of the business? Share your experience in class working on accounting and what parts of accounting you enjoy/don't enjoy. Ask your mentor to share some examples of where businesses have misused or misunderstood the basic concepts of Accounting.

[Return to First Page](#)

**Current Trends/Challenges:** Ask what the biggest business/company challenge facing your mentor is currently. How do they plan to overcome the challenges? What trends are they seeing in their target market currently that are affecting their business?

**Project Management:** Provide a thorough but concise overview of what you are learning related to project management in the workplace. Have you participated in any class exercises based on project management? Ask your mentor for some tips in effective project management. This could include managing deadlines and people, setting realistic goals and evaluating the project once it is completed. Inquire about their experiences related to management and ask for advice in dealing effectively with these situations.

## Economics

**Economics:** Talk with your mentor about how people feel about the economy. What do they mean when they say it is “good” or “bad?” What experiences shape how a person thinks about the state of the economy?

**Inflation:** Examine how inflation affects individual businesses and workers. Ask your mentor what they consider to be appropriate yearly inflation rate? Is inflation considered in their annual salary review? What effect do changes in the inflation rate affect have on your mentor’s company investment decisions?

**Monetary Policy:** Ask your mentor how a reduction in the interest rate to borrow money affects the money supply? Does your mentor see a change in the economy, such as housing, when interest rates change? Do they see other examples of changes in behavior based on interest rates? Does your mentor’s company have its own bank or credit union? Is that a benefit to the employees?

**Fiscal Policy:** How do taxes affect your mentor’s business? Has their business ever considered leaving Minnesota for another state with lower taxes? Discuss whether your mentor feels that state government should offer more tax breaks/incentives to business?

**International Trade:** Explore the ways that international trade and finance affect the workings of an individual company. Ask how international currency fluctuations affect your mentor’s analysis of an investment? To what extent do international political events affect the firms your mentor evaluates? Discuss what steps your mentor’s company takes to mitigate these risks?

## Science and Technology

**Technology:** Talk about the apps and software you are learning in school, at home, or on your job. Technology could include cloud computing, cell phones, apps, iPads, e-Readers, iPods, etc. Ask your mentor about the technology they use on the job and at home. Ask your mentor to explain how they have seen technology change in the last five-ten years. How has their use of technology or habits changed and made him/her more productive?

**Current Issues:** Describe a current scientific issue that interests you. Ask your mentor what s/he thinks about the issue. Examples: Monsanto, GMOs, national security, lack of research dollars, US space policy, climate change, invasive species, stem cell research, etc.

**Science in Everyday Life:** Describe simple ways you use or think about science in your daily life. Some examples include watching a weather report, baking a cake, or visiting the doctor/pharmacy. In what ways does science affect your daily life? Ask your mentor for examples of “simple” science in their own life.

[Return to First Page](#)

**Science Careers:** Describe any careers in science that interest you. The career does not have to specifically relate to the class subject – consider science as a broad field. What courses are you taking to prepare for that career? Ask your mentor how they got into a science career. What classes did they take in high school/college that have helped the most?

**Advancement of Technology:** Students should discuss with their mentors any new technological advances that have recently been made, such as apps, Droids, iPhone, iPad, tablets, etc. How have these revolutionized the technology industry? How have they raised the bar for the competition? Do they think technological advancements are always a good thing? Students should then ask their mentor how they have seen technology advance since they were in high school. What do you anticipate the next tech gadget will be—or what would you like to see produced?

**Technology Research & Development:** Share what types of research projects you do in your class. What does the research entail (reading journals, doing experiments, etc)? If you could design your own research project, what would you do and why? Do you have the opportunity to design your own program/game? Ask about your mentor’s company’s research and development department. Why is it important for the company?

**Environmental Issues:** Humboldt Secondary School has a focus on the environment. The school’s mission is to educate a global community to be active learners who are environmentally aware and college prepared. Humboldt offers a comprehensive curriculum with high expectations and rigor for all students. Write to your mentor about how you see the school putting this mission in place. Tell them how you personally have been or will be involved. Ask your mentor about their work environment and in what ways they see their company (and other companies they know of) being a good green/environmental corporate citizen.

## Math

**Math in Everyday Life:** Think about how math is used in day to day activities, such as paying for a meal at a restaurant and figuring out the tip or calculating the mileage a vehicle gets. How many times during the day are you using or exposed to basic math without thinking about it? What activities can you think of that you didn’t realize used math? Ask your mentor how they may use basic math on the job each day.

**Math in Adulthood:** Think about math skills you may need to acquire as an adult. What kinds of skills will be important (think about doing your own taxes, balancing your checkbook, making a household budget, saving for retirement, etc.)? Ask your mentor what kinds of math skills are important as an adult, and how they learned those skills.

**Interpreting and Displaying Data:** Share a math topic you are studying and the way you are displaying the relevant data (scatter plot, histogram, stem and leaf plot, etc.). Ask your mentor how they use data displays in the workplace. You should also ask if they ever need to create displays or interpret the information to be more efficient/comprehensible.

## Healthcare/Wellness

**Current Health Topic:** Share with your mentor your opinion on a current issue related to a healthcare topic. This could be a topic you are learning about in class or one that has been in the news. Examples include stem cell research, lack of research dollars, diabetes prevention, etc. Ask your mentor to respond with their opinion and what health topic they are interested in.

[Return to First Page](#)

**Healthcare Careers or Careers in Healthcare:** Describe a career in healthcare that interests you. The career does not have to specifically relate to the class subject – consider healthcare as a broad field. What courses are you taking to prepare for that career? Ask your mentor how they got into a healthcare career. What classes did they take in high school/college that have helped the most?

**Healthcare Research & Development:** Tell your mentor about the types of research projects you do in your classes. What does the research entail (reading journals, researching websites, doing experiments, etc.)? If you could design your own research project, what would you do and why? Ask your mentor about research done in the company and/or specialty area. Why is this important for the company and/or specialty?

**Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present in the moment. Being mindful also has many benefits from decreased stress and sadness to increased levels of focus and happiness. Do you find time during your day to pause and be fully present? Talk to your mentors about ways you could be more mindful throughout your day. Do they have any mindfulness strategies?

**Stress Management:** High School can be a very stressful time; managing schoolwork, extracurricular activities, a part time job, and time with friends/family. Tell your mentor about a couple things that are currently causing you stress. How do you manage stressful situations? Explain how stressful situations can affect your overall health. Ask your mentor what they do to manage stress.

**Personal Development:** Personal development means that you are always trying to improve. This could be improving a skill like a sport or instrument. This could also mean working on communicating more calmly during an argument. We all have ways to improve ourselves and become an even better version. Discuss with you mentor some areas in your life where you are trying to improve. Why is it important to you to constantly be improving?

## Customize a Guiding Topic

*Don't see a guiding topic that fits within your curriculum? All you need to do is:*

1. Create Topic Title: provide very brief 2-4 words summarizing the topic/contents
2. Student Prompt: write leading questions/topics the students should share with their mentor. Follow format of one of the previous questions already selected for the students. Write in first person such as “share with your mentor, ask your mentor, etc.”
3. Mentor Reply: please include topics/contents that you wish a mentor would reply with.

[Return to First Page](#)