



BRISBANE SENIORS ONLINE Inc.

Computing for the over 50s

ABN 33 988 458 051

OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

Mentors are valued members and it is our intention that their tutoring on behalf of BSOL be a satisfying and stress-free experience. Our mentors are BSOL ambassadors.

These notes have been designed to provide mentors with information about their role with BSOL and their interaction with it and their learner(s).

Membership

Mentors are associate members of BSOL, and are not required to pay membership fees.

Membership Application

Joining requires the mentor to complete BSOL's Mentor Membership Application form.

Details to Database

Mentor details will be transcribed from the application form into BSOL's membership database. Details will be kept and used strictly in accordance with BSOL's Privacy Policy. This can be viewed on the website www.bsol.asn.au

Tutoring Obligation

Mentors volunteer to teach BSOL learners computer skills as per BSOL's current basic curriculum. We recognise that each mentor will have –

- different levels of computer knowledge
- their own way of tutoring which may affect the scope and order of such training.

No Technical Advice, Installation, Set-Up etc

Our charter does not include the provision of technical advice or assistance, installation of programs, set-up, configuration, reconfiguration, repairs, etc, except as noted below. For this reason, mentors have no authority from BSOL to provide such technical advice or assistance, installation of programs, set-up, configuration, reconfiguration, repairs, etc.

Any technical advice or assistance, installation of programs, set-up, configuration, reconfiguration, repairs, etc. provided by a mentor is therefore provided in a private capacity and not on behalf of BSOL. BSOL accepts no responsibility for the consequences of any such technical advice or assistance, installation of programs, set-up, configuration, reconfiguration, repairs, etc. An exception to this is where there is a requirement for the learner's computer to have basic security software – anti-virus program, firewall, anti-spyware – and the mentor is able to install it. However, if the mentor is not in a position to do so, then the learner must make

alternative arrangements to have the appropriate security software installed and configured.

No Promotion of IT Suppliers/Providers or IT Products etc

BSOL is not affiliated with any commercial organisation. While mentors may give general advice as to the desired features to look for in a particular piece of equipment e.g. a printer, mentors should not recommend a specific type or brand. Similarly, mentors should not recommend a particular supplier. Any recommendation provided by a mentor regarding a type or brand or particular supplier is provided in a private capacity and not on behalf of BSOL

Mentoring Locations

Mentoring sessions may be held one-on-one at:

- BSOL's City Training Centre
- the learner's home
- the mentor's home
- at a Brisbane City Council library
- at some other mutually agreed location or
- in small groups – no more than six people – at locations where BSOL has arranged group training facilities.

No Payment for Tutoring

Mentors receive no payment from BSOL or from learners for their voluntary mentoring, but they are entitled to ask learner(s) for the cost of printing course notes, etc. **subject to a learner's prior consent.**

Mentors are not obliged to supply these items and learners are not obliged to purchase them.

No Obligation to Accept Additional Learners

Mentors may teach as many or as few learners as they wish; the choice is theirs. Mentors are under no obligation to accept additional learners, and will not have any pressure brought to bear in this respect.

Access to BSOL Library and Training Material

Mentors have access to the BSOL library at the BSOL city office. BSOL has a range of course notes available to the mentor that may be provided by email at no cost.

Access to Photocopier

Mentors are entitled to use the photocopier at the office. Currently, the cost of black and white photocopies is 5 cents.

Interaction within Association

Mentor interaction within the BSOL is vital. For this reason, BSOL aims to hold two Mentor/Hub Coordinators meetings each year – currently April and October – so that mentors' concerns and views may be canvassed and brought to the Management Committee's attention for action where appropriate. Prior to these meetings mentors are canvassed for comments and/or agenda items, so that those unable to attend the meeting may also participate. The meetings will also give mentors the opportunity to network.

In addition the Association may call an annual Mentor/Hub Coordinator/Management Committee meeting to address issues raised and provide networking opportunities.

All members are encouraged to attend the BSOL Annual General Meeting which is usually held in August. The Association holds recreational activities such as barbecues which all members are invited to attend.

BSOL produces regular newsletters which are sent by email to all mentors and learners for whom we have a current email address. Back copies can be downloaded from the website. More information is provided under the News section on our website www.bsol.asn.au

Member Development

BSOL will from time to time, as resources permit, arrange training sessions for mentors. While mentors are not obliged to attend these sessions, they are strongly encouraged to do so.

Mentors Special Skills

Some mentors have special skills in programs outside the scope of BSOL's basic curriculum. These mentors are encouraged, but not obliged, to run sessions to –

- share their special skills with other mentors – at no cost to the other mentors. The aim is to help all of our mentors to broaden their knowledge and provide them with additional benefits in return for the time that they donate to BSOL
- Run special classes for those learners wanting to learn additional programs. BSOL may charge a fee for this training.

We envisage that these classes would be group sessions held either at the Central Training Centre or at other BSOL group training venues.

Privacy Act

Mentors must be made aware of the BSOL Privacy Policy which may be viewed on the website www.bsol.asn.au

Valuable resource

Mentors are a valued resource and we are anxious that the BSOL/Hub Coordinator /Mentor/Learner relationship is a rewarding experience for each party.

Learner Turnover

As we always have a number of learners awaiting mentor allocation, mentors should be aware that it is important to achieve reasonable learner turnover.

Wherever possibly mentors should:

- indicate to their learner the approximate length of the training course to be undertaken. This overcomes the misconception that it will run for 12 months – see Length of Course below
- attempt to minimize the learner 'no show' problem (which lengthens the training course) by making learners aware that mentors are not paid, and in fact incur certain costs that are unrecoverable.

Length of Course

The prime aim of BSOL is to teach learner members computer skills as per its basic curriculum. There is a danger that some learners may come to perceive the tutoring session primarily as a social visit. This may result in an excessively long tutoring period, which means that other potential learners may have to wait a long time before they can commence their lessons. Similarly, mentors may also become comfortable with the arrangement and unwittingly prolong the mentoring period, again to the disadvantage of waiting learners. While we recognise that there will be a number of factors that will determine the tutoring period, and that the period will vary from learner to learner, we urge our mentors to finalise the mentoring sessions once the curriculum has been covered and sufficient revision has been provided. For home mentoring, we suggest 12 lessons as an appropriate guideline, but recognise this number can vary greatly depending on what the mentor feels is appropriate for each particular situation.

Repeat Courses

Learners are entitled to repeat aspects of the course during their membership period. If they indicate a desire to do this, the mentor should refer the matter to their Hub Coordinator who may decide to allocate a new mentor to provide the additional training.

Learner Unable to Comprehend Training On occasions a mentor will recognise that, no matter how many sessions are provided, a learner, for whatever reason, is having unreasonable difficulty in trying to understand and remember the lessons. Where this is a problem, the mentor should refer the matter to the Hub Coordinator. Where appropriate, a refund or part refund may be granted. This is entirely at the discretion of the Management Committee.

Uncommitted Learner

On rare occasions, a learner may appear to have little commitment to the tutoring sessions and will cancel sessions, sometimes at very short notice. We do not expect mentors to be treated this way and we suggest that:

- the mentor first tries to discuss the problem with the learner, as there may have been a change in circumstances which now makes it difficult for the learner to
- attend sessions at the agreed time and/or day. Simple rescheduling may solve the problem. If this does not solve the problem, the mentor should discuss the matter with the Hub Coordinator.

Incompatible Learner/Mentor – Mentor/Learner

On rare occasions we recognise that a mentor and a learner are incompatible. Where this happens the mentor contact should be made with Hub Coordinator, and the problem explained. The Hub Coordinator should try to resolve the issue, if necessary by allocating a different mentor to that learner.

Use of Email – Learners

BSOL encourages mentors to use email as much as possible in their non-tutoring dealings with learners so that the process becomes part of the learning process.

Conversion – Learners to Mentors/Ambassadors

Mentors are urged to convert the more proficient learners into mentors and/or BSOL ambassadors.

Problems/Concerns/Queries etc

Mentors should direct any query in this respect to their Hub Coordinator. In the unlikely event that the query involves their Hub Coordinator, it should be directed to the BSOL President.

No longer wish to be a Mentor?

If for any reason you no longer wish to remain as a BSOL mentor, please advise your Hub Coordinator or the Office. This will enable us to reallocate your learners, and update our database.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR MENTORS

1. Thou shalt impart information in a logical sequence. The suggested format does this.
2. Thou shalt break things down into "bite sized pieces Don't put too much information into one session.
3. Thou shalt stick to basics. This curriculum covers what participants ' must know '
4. Thou shalt use analogies. Some have been given, but please develop and use your own. Analogies are 'user-friendly' and make your learner feel 'yes I can relate to this.'
5. Thou shalt be mindful of time. Everyone's concentration wanders after a certain time, and as we get older it wanders at an alarming rate. Know when to call it a day.
6. Thou shalt give people the opportunity to take notes. Most people need to write things down to remember them. This need increases, as we get older.
7. Thou shalt ask questions. Instead of repeating the last or recent piece of information, try 'how did we do that?' etc.
8. Thou shalt revise, revise, revise. Always remember to briefly run through the last segments covered.
9. Thou shalt tie your hands behind your back. Unless absolutely necessary, do not touch the mouse.
10. Thou shalt not baffle others with technical terms. Avoid all unnecessary 'industry jargon'

Revised: 15 August 2008 BK