

# Overcoming barriers

Mentoring is not without its challenges. It is important to know that various challenges and barriers will arise as you go through your digital mentoring journey. Learners may lack Foundation Digital Skills, they may fear technology or feel anxious about it, they may have physical or social obstacles that may get in the way of their learning.

Digital Mentors too may have their own reservations about particular technologies, topics or online activities. They may also find it hard to relate to their learner's experiences and attitudes.


While you may be able to prepare for and address some challenges without involving the learner, 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.

## Common challenges

Some of the challenges people may have when learning something new can be harder to overcome than others. Below are some examples:


 Low literacy

 Learning disability

 Lack of support

 Low confidence

 Negative attitude to learning

 No time

 Difficulty retaining information

Some situations, may require specialist support and may be outside your skill set. As with all things outside your role, it's OK to signpost people to specialist support either locally or online. You can fulfill your role as a Digital Mentor by helping them find that support. Other common barriers include:

😞 Lack of interest

👥 Community requirements

😞 Negative past experiences

🏠 Lack of support at home

## Potential solutions

Below are some recommendations on what you could do to help work around these issues. Although each situation is unique, the below list can be used as a starting point for you to explore some solutions.

### Challenge:

### Potential solution:

👥 Community requirements

Women only groups, avoid prayer times, after school sessions.

🧠 Learning disability

Identify how their disability affects their learning and research online how to support. You can also seek advice from a specialist service provider or professional body.

📄 Difficulty retaining information

Break learning into manageable chunks and provide handouts.

😞 Low confidence

Promote the social aspect – meeting like minded people and making friends can make all the difference.

😞 Negative attitude to learning

Keep it informal and relaxed. Make learning personal to their interests.

🕒 No time

Focus on quick wins. Offer 'drop in' sessions. Reassure them that they don't have to commit to a series of classes.

😞 Lack of interest

Find the "hook" – the thing that will keep them interested.

 Lack of support at home

Offer free support in your organisation to learn and practice.

 Negative past experiences


Build trust and confidence with your support as digital mentor.


## Digital Mentor challenges


Some challenges are more specific to being a Digital Mentor. These can include:

 Keeping up to date with tech

 Technical jargon

 Managing expectations

 Different learning rates

 Disclosure of personal info

 Miscommunication

 No background in education

Things you can do to overcome these barriers include:

- Ask Lead Digital Mentor to do regular upskilling sessions as support, suggest doing weekly or fortnightly seminars or meetings with a topic of their interest for their 2 hour support, or attend Good Things webinars.
- Ask a mentor to host an upskilling session as a way to practice their facilitation skills.
- Have a list of common technical jargon and put them on a whiteboard or list.
- Try to download extra resources you find, keep in touch with other Digital Mentors to share resources.
- Ask Good Things for help.
- Find out the answer together: you don't have to be a tech expert, just know how to help people find out what they want to know.