

How to Use a Mentor

The volunteer mentor program is a wonderful way for members in the Accreditation process to receive personal feedback on their clinical case submissions and for mentors to give back to a process that provided them with a tremendous growth experience. It is helpful for both parties when communication is clear and concise. In order to have a fruitful and positive experience, listed below are a few tips to consider when using a mentor.

1. Locate someone from the volunteer mentor list. Make an introduction via e-mail or over the phone to inquire whether the person would be available to mentor you. If not, please contact another examiner from the list. You may also elect to send your request for anonymous review via credentialing@aacd.com. The AACD Credentialing Department will facilitate the communication between both parties in a confidential manner.
2. E-mail is a great way to communicate for most people, but things do become lost in the flood of e-mails that we all receive. If you do not hear back from your mentor or the credentialing department right away, you must assume that your e-mail did not go through and that you need to send your correspondence again or make a phone call.
3. When asking about case selection, list the case type being considered as well as the proposed treatment plan.
4. Provide an evaluation of the case. It is helpful for the mentor to know where you are in your learning. Most mentors appreciate when you provide your own evaluation of the case. If the request for feedback is concerning case selection, you should discuss the positives and the potential negatives of the case. If you think that the case will be challenging or relatively straight-forward, you should state this and why you feel that way. If the case is in mid-treatment, it is helpful for you to offer your own evaluation of the current standing of the case.
5. List the type of feedback you are looking for by asking specific questions such as "Does this case appear to be a good case selection for Case Type III?" or "What are the potential challenges with this case?"
6. Provide a variety of photos so that the mentor has enough information to provide an educated response to the questions that are posed. If you are only sending one or two photos, the information you receive in return will be limited. Remember that the examiners are looking at all 12 views and it is to your benefit to provide the mentor with the same amount of information.
7. Send photographs of appropriate quality. If the mentor can't see things clearly due to poor exposure, poor focus or excessive saliva and debris, they cannot provide accurate feedback. Photographs sent for mentor feedback should meet Accreditation standards.
8. Use the AACD PowerPoint template available for download from the AACD Web site to organize your before and after photos so that the mentor can efficiently review the case and give you feedback in a timely manner.
9. Compress the photos for easy e-mail submission. Large files are difficult to open and at times simply do not transmit. See "How to e-mail your PowerPoint" on the AACD Web site for step-by-step directions.
10. Listen to the mentor. If you decide to proceed with a case against mentor advice, you do so at your own risk. Mentors try to be gentle and not too rigid in their feedback because occasionally a candidate has the skill, talent and luck to pull off a case that looks challenging. On the other hand, if a mentor is telling you that a case looks challenging or difficult it is probably best to move on and look for another case.
11. Lastly, remember that the critique by a mentor is only the critique of one person. **Positive feedback from your mentor does not guarantee success.** While all mentors are active examiners and are intimately familiar with the examination criteria, on exam day there will be five different examiners independently judging your work. Borderline cases can fall on either side of the pass/fail line. You are encouraged to actively work with a mentor to avoid or correct faults that can jeopardize your chances of success.

The volunteer mentor program is one of the many unique benefits of the Accreditation process. Take advantage of it.