

The Selection, Role and Responsibilities of an ART Mentor

Purpose of mentors

Everyone enters the ART Training Scheme as a teacher. Some teachers, both accredited and non-accredited are asked to take on the additional responsibility and commitment of mentoring a less experienced teacher.

Mentors provide guidance and support to teachers after the day course, complementing their knowledge of ART Training Scheme techniques with their wide experience of teaching and people.

The selection of mentors with the right attributes is critical to the success of the scheme. Becoming a good teacher requires a lot more than attendance at a day course and the learning of some new techniques. It also requires practice, feedback and reinforcement of new ways of doing things, otherwise basic human nature kicks in and people revert back to their old ways of doing things.

Mentors are key to this skills development period – it takes time, interpersonal skills and a commitment to change.

The Role of an ART Mentor

Mentors provide guidance and support to teachers, complementing their knowledge of ART Training Scheme techniques with their wide experience of teaching and people.

The position of mentor is a responsible one and involves on-going commitment following the ART Training Scheme day course. A mentor is expected to work with their teacher to develop and extend their skills and techniques after the course. Mentors also have an important role to play in the assessment of teachers.

Mentoring takes time, self-knowledge and good communication skills. A teacher will be looking to their mentor to:

- Acquire knowledge and information
- Receive feedback to help develop skills
- Offer suggestions, guidance, and ideas

Immediately after the course the mentor will need to ensure that their teacher starts teaching as soon as they can. They should be building a rapport with their teacher; taking the lead role in building a relationship. Teacher and mentor should work together developing practical and leadership skills until the teacher is capable of working independently. Teaching alongside each other is often the best way of mentoring.

If they are not already an ART member, Mentors can become an accredited member of ART when their teacher completes a module. However, if their teacher does not complete a module they can still opt to gain accreditation as a teacher in their own right.

Selection of mentors

Mentoring takes time, self-knowledge and good communication skills.

A mentor should be:

Positive at all times
Encouraging
Patient
Committed
Prepared to listen
Prepared to challenge
Trustworthy
Empathetic
Ensuring ART techniques are used

A mentor should not be:

Confrontational
Negative
Dictatorial
Unwilling to change

Typically mentors have a large amount of teaching experience and are actively engaged in current teaching, possibly at multiple towers. Mentors don't have to be brilliant ringers but they do have to be good teachers. More and more of our active mentors have gained their experience by teaching using the ART Approach and are already ART Members.

To ensure that the mentor understands what the teacher is working towards, they will need to have either:

- Attended, as a paying delegate, the course with the teacher.
- Have attended the same module course and still be within the Time Limit to be working towards accreditation. (Please refer to the Time Limit section in the [ART Regulations](#))
- Already be an accredited Member of ART for the relevant module.

What are the responsibilities of the mentor?

1. Ensure new ringers are registered onto the SmART Ringer website by the teacher and they are issued with individual Learning the Ropes Personal Progress Logbooks. Additional logbooks can be ordered via the [ART online shop](#).
2. Help their teacher with lesson plans and ensure they are written up in the Teacher Training Logbook
3. Work with the teacher as they teach, add feedback and sign the Teacher Training Logbook
4. When ready, arrange for an ART Assessor to observe a teaching session
5. Ensure the ART Assessor completes and signs the Teacher Training Logbook
6. Encourage their mentees to accredit by successfully completing an assessed lesson. Bear in mind that a course delegate has two years from the course date to submit themselves for assessment.

Factors to consider when proposing anyone as a mentor

It is the Tutor and Course Organiser who decide who is going to be a mentor either before or during each day course. Communicating this organising principle consistently and openly from the beginning keeps you in control.

Consider the mentor pool. You should consider selecting mentors from the pool of local practicing ART members or other experienced teachers who have already been on a day course and are actively working towards their accreditation. They may or may not be ART members, but they should be committed to using ART approach and techniques.

Consider teachers who have a mentor they'd like to bring along with them. This is often a sign of a good relationship and a degree of thought about what happens after the day course. It might be the only easy way of pairing a teacher with a local mentor if they are attending a course which is a long way from their home tower.

Consider pairing teachers and mentors with personalities that are going to complement each other. There's no point in pairing a nervous teacher with a domineering personality; such a domineering personality will be much better off with a similar teacher as long as they respect each other.

Be flexible. Be prepared to mix and match pairings on the day depending on how people interact. But make sure that everyone is aware of the pairings at the end of the course and that these are communicated correctly to the [ART Administrator](#).

Consider co-teaching. Sometimes there are two (or even three) teachers who are all reasonably experienced teachers in their own right, but there is no obvious suitable local mentor for them. In this scenario setting them up as a pair of 'co-teachers' where they act as mentor to each other can work really well.

Be innovative. In rare cases it might be right for a tutor to mentor a teacher. Mentoring by phone, email or zoom has on occasion also been used and proven successful.

Dealing with difficult decisions in the selection of mentors

Sometimes you are going to have to make some difficult decisions particularly if someone wants to be a mentor and they aren't right for the role. The following advice may make the decision easier to make and communicate, although you should remember to discuss issues with the Tutor as decisions need to be jointly agreed.

Give yourself time. If someone asks to mentor who you are unsure of then use a stock reply such as "everyone who goes on the course must apply as a teacher; mentor selection comes later" which will give you time to reflect and ask for help if required. Remember that people talk so it is best to take your chosen line with everyone, not just those with whom you have a problem.

Don't take the decision on your own. If you have concerns about a mentor (or a teacher who might need a particular type of mentor) then talk about it with others in ART. Your first port of call is each other, but other course organisers or Tutors may well be able to give advice.

Use others to deliver the message. If saying no to someone could cause an issue for you then use the external expert, the Tutor, to deliver the message.

Ask yourself what is in the best interests of ringing? If you are feeling pressurised or pulled between two competing arguments then ask yourself “What should I do for the best interests of bell ringing?” Listen to your gut instinct and go with that; don’t be bullied by officers and good ringers, they will do the same to their teacher.

And afterwards?

Sometimes things will go wrong: teachers will end up with inactive mentors; mentors with inactive teachers or they just won’t get on. That’s life. So setting up expectations well beforehand will help you manage these issues. It also stops people dropping out because things are not happening as they thought they would and should after the course. So let people know that it is perfectly acceptable for teachers and mentors to change pairings after a day course – just make sure the [ART Administrator](#) knows about it. Mentors have the option of accrediting as a teacher in their own right if their teacher is inactive.

Group teaching and mentoring in a formal or informal setting helps avoid these problems.

Definitions

Teacher

A teacher is someone who is either new to teaching bell ringing or has been teaching for a while but has not used ART teaching techniques before.

Mentor

Mentors are more experienced teachers who have both the time and skillset to mentor a less experienced teacher. To ensure that the mentor understands what the teacher is working towards, they will need to have either:

- Attended, as a paying delegate, the course with the teacher.
- Have attended the same module course and still be within the Time Limit to be working towards accreditation. (Please refer to the Time Limit section in the [ART Regulations](#))
- Already be an accredited Member of ART for the relevant module.

Co-mentors (group teaching)

Sometimes it is not possible to find a local teacher/mentor pairing and in this situation two or more teachers can be paired to teach together and mentor each other. This arrangement might also be useful for two experienced teachers where it would be inappropriate if one had to be designated a mentor and the other a teacher.