



The Role of a Breed Mentor

Mentoring is a responsibility to the learner, the breed, and the integrity of judging. Your role is to develop informed, independent judgment through accurate teaching, thoughtful discussion, and honest feedback.

Understand who is sitting beside you.

A learner may be new to this breed yet have decades of experience breeding or judging others. Being designated the mentor does not mean you are the more experienced dog person. Ask about their background, previous breed education, and goals. Adapt the depth, pace, and vocabulary of the session; check understanding rather than assuming it.

Teach within your knowledge and experience.

Know the standard and explain the basis for your interpretation. Welcome probing questions without treating them as challenges to your authority. Say when you do not know, verify the answer, and involve a more experienced mentor when needed. A mentor designation is a commitment to teach and continue learning.

Develop understanding and independent judgment.

Help learners recognize breed type, weigh virtues and weaknesses, and explain their decisions. Invite questions and give specific, respectful feedback. A learner need not agree with every personal preference to demonstrate understanding. Keep discussion centered on the dogs and the standard.

Sign thoughtfully and truthfully.

Read what each form asks you to verify. Do not sign an inaccurate description or certify a condition you cannot support. If asked to endorse readiness, you may decline when your observations do not support it; explain the gaps and suggest further learning. Verification of an educational experience is different from an endorsement of readiness.*

Protect the independence of future judging.

Mentoring creates no obligation to award the mentor's dogs, favor their kennel, or repay educational help with wins. Never imply or expect such a return. Teach learners to evaluate every exhibit against the standard, regardless of personal relationships.

Be prepared, respectful, and accountable.

Give the session focused attention, discuss dogs discreetly, and avoid breeder criticism or kennel promotion. Agree on the session's purpose, summarize what was learned, and identify useful next steps. Invite feedback on your teaching as well as questions about the breed.

* AKC's May 2026 Mentoring/Tutoring Form verifies that the described experience occurred. Its Apprentice Training Form also specifies preparation and breed conversation, while distinguishing the signature from an approval recommendation. Follow the wording of the applicable form.