

Tips for Successful Mentors in Pract.us



This guide helps Pract.us users be better Mentors. For more detailed help with other Pract.us roles, see these additional guides:

[Learners Guide](#)

[Skill Authors Guide](#)

[Mentors Guide](#)

[Card Authors Guide](#)

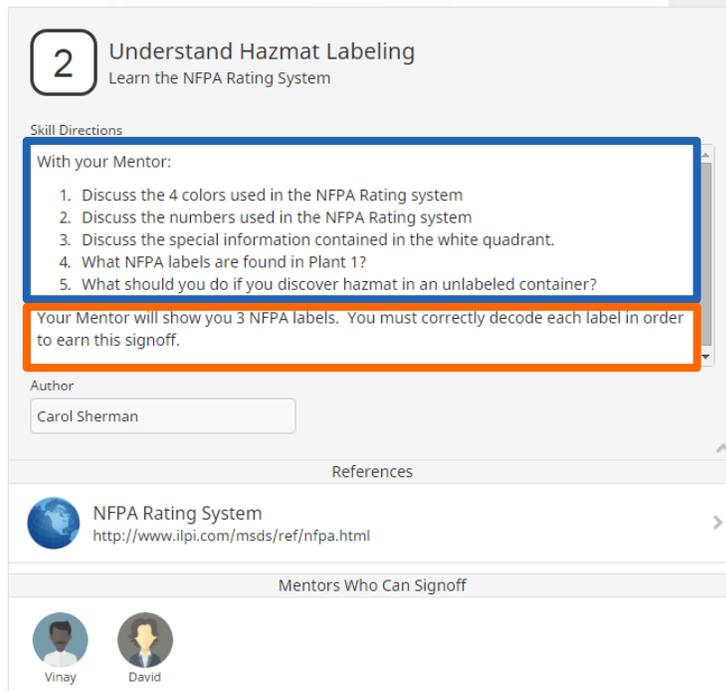
[Managers Guide](#)

[Team Admins Guide](#)

Within Pract.us, some employees will be asked to act as mentors for their colleagues who are learning new skills. If you're chosen as a mentor, you may have some questions about what your role entails.

Understand the task.

When a learner contacts you about a skill, first take a look at the **behavioral objective** (in the **blue** box below) of the skill. Then take a look at the **directions** (in the **orange** box).



2 Understand Hazmat Labeling
Learn the NFPA Rating System

Skill Directions

With your Mentor:

1. Discuss the 4 colors used in the NFPA Rating system
2. Discuss the numbers used in the NFPA Rating system
3. Discuss the special information contained in the white quadrant.
4. What NFPA labels are found in Plant 1?
5. What should you do if you discover hazmat in an unlabeled container?

Your Mentor will show you 3 NFPA labels. You must correctly decode each label in order to earn this signoff.

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References

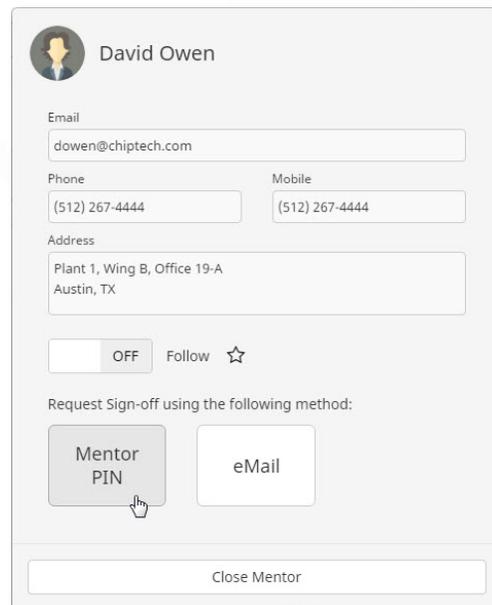
 NFPA Rating System
<http://www.ilpi.com/msds/ref/nfpa.html>

Mentors Who Can Signoff

 Vinay  David

Parts of a Skill

You may be asked to demonstrate the skill first so the learner can see how it's done and then practice it. Or the learner may use other resources to master the skill and you will just confirm that he or she has met the behavioral objective and proffer your stamp of approval by signing off.



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Request Sign-off using the following method:

Signing off a skill

Regardless of how involved you are in the learning process, there are few things you can do to ensure the learner's success and make your job much easier.

Prepare for your meeting.

Schedule your time.

If you want to spend a little time demonstrating and practicing a skill with the learner, schedule a short period of uninterrupted time to work. Usually 30 minutes is about right. If you need more time, schedule two periods.

Read the Directions.

Be familiar with the skill, directions and best practices before you meet with the learner. You don't want to waste time teaching the wrong thing or missing important points from the directions.

Ask questions.

Ask your manager or the skill author for clarification on the behavioral objective or directions if needed. When you meet with the learner, ask about previous experience and current knowledge. Find out how comfortable the learner is feeling so you can determine how much support you need to offer.

Plan ahead.

Before you meet with your learner, think through the session. How will you demonstrate the skill so the learner can follow along? What are typical gotchas and questions that you need to be ready for? How will you handle it if the learner gets overwhelmed or confused?

Stay open, flexible and focused on results.

Let learners know what to expect.

At the beginning of your time with a learner, give him or her an overview of what you have planned. Let your learner know that it's ok to ask questions, ask for repetitions, make mistakes and take whatever time they need to understand. Never try to trick or surprise the learner. It will end badly for you both.

If you're not teaching a skill but just validating what someone has learned independently, then let your learner know exactly what behavior you're looking for.

Relax and don't rush.

Don't make these sessions grave and serious. Even if the skill is important and tricky, stay relaxed and patient. Your attitude will help learners relax, which in turn helps them learn faster.

Stay focused and don't add too many details.

If your learner is very new or if the skill is complex, stay focused on one small step at a time and don't demonstrate multiple methods of accomplishing the same thing. Extraneous details will crowd out the basic information your learner needs to grasp. You can spend time on the nuances later.

Make learning a conversation.

As you demonstrate or explain the skill, ask if the learner has questions, start a conversation about why you follow a certain procedure. And check in with the learner along the way to make sure everything is making sense. Stop and review if necessary.

Point out best practices and standards.

If there's any part of the skill or task that is very important, point out the significance and repeat it. You can even ask the learner to repeat it back to you.

Demonstrate, support and observe.

Demonstrate the skill until your learner feels confident enough to try it. Then let the learner proceed with your guidance and hints. When you feel the learner can do it without hints, just observe and give feedback. Repeat feedback right before a learner starts the task so they can remember to apply it as they proceed.

Practice if needed.

After an initial session, you might want to let the learner practice independently for a while and then come back to give you a demonstration.

Make feedback objective and specific.

It's nice to include positive feedback as well as hints for improvement, but all feedback should focus exclusively on the task, never on the person. And your comments should be very specific. For example, never say that work is sloppy, but rather point out that the number in the second column has been transposed and the sum calculation is missing the last row of numbers. If possible, offer topics for them to review or practice on their own before meeting with you again.

Create your session together with the learner.

Every learner is different and every mentor session will be different, so stay open and flexible and communicate with the learner so you can adjust as you go. Allow yourself to make mistakes, too, and stay focused on the goal at hand.

Sign off the skill when you're satisfied.

Once you feel that the learner has met the skill objective, you can sign them off. Remember that the skill objective may not comprehend everything a person could know about that topic. You're not asking the learner to master everything at once, so go ahead and sign off if the objective is met.

However, if you're not satisfied that a learner has mastered the objective, then don't sign it off. In designating you as a mentor, your team recognizes and values your experience and judgment and expects you to uphold the standards. If you have to reject an approval request, always schedule a follow-up meeting so the learner can try again after some practice or review.

Practice your mentoring skills.

If you're not comfortable with mentoring and would like to practice before you start, ask your manager or a colleague you know well to go through a dry run with you and offer tips. This can help you feel comfortable with the process and help you identify any tendencies you need to watch, such as speaking very quickly or taking shortcuts.

If you follow these tips, you'll find that mentoring with Pract.us comes naturally. If you're still uncomfortable, though, make sure your manager knows so other mentors can be found. But most people enjoy the mentoring role once they get used to it, and it's a good bet you will, too.

Getting Help

- For more help using Pract.us, see our Support Site: support.pract.us.
- You can also email us at support@pract.us