

Instructions for Answerland Mentors

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Week 1: Introductions

Email your mentee. Introduce yourself and ask your mentee how they would prefer to communicate with you: email, phone, chat, or in person (if the option is available). Set a schedule for checking in with your mentee once a week for two months.

Discuss the possibility of being available during your mentee's chat shifts. If this is not possible, consider scheduling a time outside of a regular shift when you are both available. The mentee would log in to Answerland, even though not on the official schedule, and answer questions; the mentor would be available for consultation.

If it's helpful, you and your mentee can practice using QuestionPoint:

1. Person being "Librarian" will sign in to QuestionPoint and click *Launch Chat* from the left column under Quick Links. When the chat monitor opens, select *Monitor 'Practice Queue' Only* (box in the lower left)
2. Person being "Patron" will sign in to QuestionPoint on a different computer and click on *Chat Practice Patron Form* in the left column under Quick Links. The form opens in a separate window. Patron will fill out the form and submit. Be sure the *Practice* box is checked (top of form).
3. "Librarian" should see the Patron question, and can practice chat.

Week 2: Before the first shift

Tell or send your mentee answers to the following questions:

- What advice do you wish you'd been given when you started working with Answerland?
- Suggest three resources that you have used to assist with multiple patron questions.
- What tip(s) do you have for working with the QuestionPoint software?
- What tip(s) do you have for helping out patrons with questions specific to their library (accounts, policies, access, *etc.*)?

Week 3: After the first shift

After their first shift, your mentee should communicate the following:

- Their most successful patron interaction
- Their least successful patron interaction
- Questions they have about the QuestionPoint software, communicating with patrons, finding reputable resources or anything else

If you were unable to be logged in during your mentee's first shift, email Tamara for their transcripts and read them over. Keep in mind the Quality Team's rubric for quality in chat reference:

- A cheerful, welcoming tone
- A good reference interview (asking clarifying questions)
- Use of authoritative resources
- Good general communication skills
- Offering more help
- Gracefully concluding the chat transaction

Let your mentee know the ways they were successful. Offer specific feedback when something can be improved.

Weeks 4-8: General check in + resource sharing

Continue to communicate with your mentee once a week. Answer their questions and review their transcripts at least twice during this time. Some other suggestions:

- Discuss the challenges and rewards of working with patrons of different ages.
- Tell your mentee about a chat interaction you've had where you wished you'd done something differently.
- Tell your mentee about a chat interaction you've had that you are particularly proud of.
- Review resources in the [For Librarians section](#) of the Answerland website.
- Review [award-winning transcripts](#) with your mentee.
- Try out a free resource from [LibrariesofOregon.org](#) and compare notes with your mentee.
- Work on a question in Shared Follow Up together.

Week 9: Wrap up

Remind your mentee all of the ways they can find help going forward (Answerland website, Answerland listserv, QuestionPoint help documents, Answerland Quality Team, etc.) Email [a member of the Quality Team](#) to let them know you are wrapping up.

Your formal mentoring commitment ends now, but you and your mentee are encouraged to stay in touch as much or as little as works for you both.

Tips for mentors

- Ask your mentee what kind of feedback works best for them.
- Explain your feedback fully, with a story instead of labels. An example of a label is “You need to be more cheerful.” A story is composed of “Here's what I noticed” and “Here's what you need to do.” Examples: “When you greet the patron you sometimes type *hello* only. Think about adding adding punctuation such as *hello!*, or an emoticon :-), or additional greeting such as *thanks for contacting Answerland!*”

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How to get help

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to [contact a member of the Answerland Quality Team](#) or Tamara Ottum, Answerland Coordinator (tamara.ottum@state.or.us).