



How to Make a Mentor-Apprenticeship a Win-Win Relationship

by Holly Gage

The Mentor-Apprenticeship is an exciting, fulfilling relationship for both parties involved. As the mentor imparts valuable skills and knowledge to their student, the student helps the mentor in the studio, while teaching, at shows, with their website, marketing, and more. It's a relationship where each helps the other to grow and prosper, and it's very rewarding.

How to Find Your Mentor/Apprentice Match

A good place to start your search for an apprentice is within your own circle. Do you have a student, a friend, or guild member you feel would make a good match? How about putting a "call out" on a social media Metal Clay or jewelry site.

- Discuss what you can offer a student as a mentor, highlighting your skills such as, you are good in marketing, awesome in technique, or have great teacher skills.
- Find out what the student has to offer you, such as organizational skills, computer skills, or great assistance skills.
- Discuss what you are looking for in a Mentor/Apprentice relationship, and how your goals and his/her future match up.
- Talk about frequency of your meetings and availability to each other. Be honest and realistic with your time and expectations.

What's the Difference Between a Short Term Apprenticeship and a Long Term Apprenticeship?

Both relationships involve mutual sharing and benefit, but the goals are a bit different. There is a time element suggested, but many choose to extend their relationship beyond this, since tight bonds are certainly made.

A Long Term Apprenticeship is at least a one-year commitment where a student has been identified for their extraordinary talent. They have that "IT factor." During this time, he/she will gain a number of invaluable skills aimed to strengthen their teaching, artistry, and/or leadership skills through hands on experiences with their mentor. At the end of his/her year as an Apprenticeship, the hope is they will be ready to embark on a career in the Metal Clay arts as an artist or teacher.

A Short Term Apprenticeship is at least a 6-month commitment. The best way a student can learn and truly explore the many options available in a Metal Clay career, is to give them real life experiences to engage in. The experience is more open-ended such as setting up at shows, writing articles, teaching, submitting to publications, and more. The aim is to have a mutually beneficial experience for the student AND the mentor. While you are helping them gain skills and learning the ins and outs of the Metal Clay arts, you are working with a student willing to learn and assist you.

In the Studio the Apprentice will gain:



- Technical Metal Clay skills.
- Metal Clay design skills.
- Exclusive skills from their mentor.
- Access to a working studio, resources, and tools.
- Metalsmith/Metal Clay crossover skills.
- Skills in self-promotion and public relations.

In the Classroom the Apprentice Will Gain:

- Hands on classroom and teaching skills.
- How to pick the best teaching opportunities for their skill set.
- How to land a teaching gig.
- How to promote a class.
- How to write lesson plans and handouts.

The Apprentice obligation to their Mentor is to:

- Communicate on a regular basis with your Mentor about activities, progress, and struggles.
- Follow through with commitments by being reliable and accountable.
- Learn to be generous with their knowledge.
- Respect and keep trade secrets of your Mentor.
- Try to develop your own voice in your work.
- To offer assistance to your mentor with tasks you are proficient.
- Be willing to “Pay it Forward” in the future.
- Pay for your own consumables.
- Pay for your travel and expenses to and from events planned.
- Dress appropriately at venues.
- Use appropriate language in all settings.
- Be on time and prepared to participate in activities with your mentor.

The Mentor’s obligation to the Apprentice is to:

- Have a desire to help the Student Ambassador or Apprentice develop their own original voice.
- Be a sounding board for new ideas presented by the student.
- Respect and keep trade secrets of your student.
- Communicate on a regular basis with your student about activities, progress, and struggles he/she may be experiencing.
- Be patient and organized in instruction.
- Follow through with commitments by being reliable and accountable.
- Interested in helping the student develop organizational and leadership skills.
- A willingness to share your experiences in the field.

Biography: Holly Gage of Gage Designs is a 2015 Saul Bell Design winner recognized for distinction in jewelry design. She creates contemporary jewelry and teaches her unique techniques with a gentle blend of design instruction and technical proficiency. Holly brings her innovation, creativity, and gift of helping others find their artistic voice through classes, mentoring programs, and master workshops. Classes are available live Online, throughout the US, and abroad. She is a full-time jewelry artist, Certified Metal Clay Instructor, author, and conference speaker. In addition, Holly holds a BS in Fine Art and Education. Her jewelry and articles on techniques and design can be found in over 65+ regional and national publications including the Best of America Jewelry Artists; Named 3rd in Handmade Business: Top 12 Makers, Movers, and Shakers; Metal Clay Today; Art Jewelry and Lapidary Journal Jewelry Artist; Making Jewellery; among others. You can find more information about Holly’s jewelry, classes, and awards, along with numerous Metal Clay tips, tutorials, and blog on her web site at <http://www.HollyGage.com>

