

# Frequently Asked Questions

Please read all questions and answers below. If your question isn't answered here, feel free to email [mentor@iplaylikeagirl.org](mailto:mentor@iplaylikeagirl.org).

## General Questions About Play Like a Girl

### **What is Play Like a Girl's Meet + Mentor program?**

Play Like a Girl offers a number of programs to middle school students, including Meet + Mentor, a unique mentorship program that connects girls ages 10-13 with caring, trusted, consistent women mentors to advance their pursuit of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) career interests through mentoring and 21st-century skills development. Centered around the foundational experience of group networking, mentors give their mentees the confidence, motivation, and support to succeed in school and in life. Our signature Meet + Mentor program is a six-week mentoring program that annually matches over 1,500 volunteer mentors from partner companies with multiple cohorts of roughly 150 Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools students and girls across the nation for weekly mentoring sessions throughout the school year, alternating between group mentoring circles and cohort-specific speed mentoring, networking and community building events. Mentees and mentors also become a part of our exclusive STEM network with a 1-year Play Like a Girl membership and the opportunity to attend the annual #GirlsRockSTEM Summit.

### **Who can become a Play Like a Girl mentor?**

Employees of our partner organizations and any woman who is a graduate student, postdoc, or professional working in a STEM or related field, across all disciplines and sectors.

### **Where will I mentor?**

As distance learning continues in the 2020-21 school year, Play Like a Girl is committed to connecting students to the mentoring support they need now more than ever! Mentoring takes place remotely, from your computer, using Play Like a Girl's secure Zoom account. Mentors meet their mentees in the main room before entering Zoom breakout rooms for their weekly mentoring circles. Each Meet + Mentor session ends with time for Q&As and reflection in the main Zoom meeting room where a panel of mentors lead a full cohort of over 300 mentees and fellow mentors in deeper discourse on the weekly topic.

### **When does Meet + Mentor take place?**

Meet + Mentor can take place in-person or online during students' lunch period between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm CT and/or after school between 3:30 pm and 6:00 pm CT. The program offers a series of group mentoring sessions that cover personal development and career exploration topics such as goal setting and college readiness, while providing mentees an opportunity to transfer their learnings into action by encouraging them to complete a small social good project over the course of the program. Mentors and mentees are also invited to attend community building events held bi-weekly to further facilitate networking among all program cohort participants. The total weekly time commitment is approximately 90 minutes.

Please note that Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools are experiencing unprecedented scheduling challenges due to COVID-19. We are working closely with our school partners as they continue to make adjustments to meet official Department of Education guidance about school openings and remote learning. We will maintain contact with all mentors about scheduling changes as school schedules evolve. Thank you for your flexibility and patience.

### **What is the weekly time commitment?**

Live and virtual sessions are 90 minutes long. We ask that mentors arrive or log into Zoom at least 10-15 minutes prior to the session start time so there are no delays in starting the session on time. Mentors meet their mentees in a designated classroom at each partner school. In the virtual learning environment, mentors meet in the Zoom main meeting room before entering Zoom breakout rooms for their bi-weekly mentoring circles. Each virtual Meet + Mentor session ends with time for Q&As and reflection in the main Zoom meeting room.



### **How many years of mentoring are expected at Play Like a Girl?**

Mentors must commit to participating for one full school year - which equals two six-week cohorts. Cohorts convene for six weeks in the fall and winter/spring of each academic year. We highly encourage you to consider mentoring for multiple years, which increases the impact of your mentoring relationship.

### **What if I don't feel confident in my ability to commit to Play Like a Girl every week?**

You can sign up for another role! This is a great option for mentors with busy schedules who would prefer a bi-weekly (or one-time), rather than weekly, commitment. In addition to mentoring in the virtual environment, we need mentors who can act as "Networking Hosts," providing mentees the chance to develop and practice their networking skills at speed mentoring and community building events. We also offer mentors the opportunity to facilitate a mentoring workshop and share their knowledge with a larger group of mentees and fellow mentors in the main Zoom meeting room each week of the six-week program. Finally, mentors can help us by popping in and out of Zoom breakout rooms to supervise mentoring circles to ensure students are safe and protected. The time commitment ranges from 30 to 90 minutes depending on the role you choose.

### **Can I choose my co-mentor?**

We encourage you to recommend other mentors at any time. Each mentor must submit a mentor application and be matched to a co-mentor and mentee group by our staff. Unfortunately, you cannot specify your co-mentor.

### **How old are the mentees?**

We work with girls in Nashville and across the United States, aged 10-13 years old currently enrolled in middle school or an equivalent, who are enthusiastic about STEM and open to group mentorship.

### **How are mentees selected?**

We work closely with our school partners and with families to identify girls who would benefit from participation in Play Like a Girl. Students are referred and recommended by partner school staff and their parents because they would benefit from group mentoring to support their personal and academic growth - especially related to STEM subjects. Common reasons why mentees enroll include the opportunity to build their science and math skills, gain confidence in presenting and public speaking, develop a love of hands-on STEM education, and gain exposure to diverse women in STEM careers.

### **What if I can't make it on my scheduled day?**

We offer two meeting day options each week. Both take place at a set time. However, each mentoring circle is scheduled to one of the meeting days at the prescribed time. Keeping to your scheduled day is preferred as consistency is beneficial for your mentees and rescheduling to another day is not always an option. In some cases, our Program Coordinator can accommodate rescheduling if requested at least a week or more in advance.

### **What if I move or change jobs during the school year and am no longer able to mentor?**

We understand that these things happen. If you know prior to the year's start that this is very likely for you, it's not the right time to become a Play Like a Girl mentor. If it happens unexpectedly, we encourage you to finish the school year with your

## **Questions About Becoming a Mentor**

### **Are you currently accepting new mentors?**

To date, we have over 1,500 women waiting to begin the screening procedure and be matched to a mentoring circle and co-mentor. In addition to these women, we invite employees from Play Like a Girl's partner organizations to apply for the 2020-21 school year. The application opens in October and will remain open into the fall if mentors are still needed. Click here for our mentor application (or interest form when the application period is closed).



## **Is training provided and/or required?**

Yes, orientation and training are required. Play Like a Girl is excited to launch a brand new online training solution to provide an engaging training experience that can be accessed safely and conveniently. Please note that both new and returning mentors are required to complete online orientation and training for the 2020-21 school year. The orientation is available [here](#). Pre-match training courses will become available in October and must be completed prior to the start of the program in November. In addition, mentors can access on-demand training and other tools on the Mentor Resources page on our website.

## **I attended the in-person training last school year but ended up not mentoring. Do I need to attend a new training session if I want to mentor this upcoming school year?**

Yes – all mentors, returning or new, are required to complete the 2020-21 online orientation and training.

## **What are the steps required for becoming a Play Like a Girl mentor?**

Mentors (including returning mentors given many changes to the 2020-21 program) must complete the following steps to participate: 1) Review the online orientation (if you haven't done so, please [click here](#)), 2) Submit a written application with two personal references, 3) Pass a criminal background check and interview with program staff, if applicable, 4) Attend the virtual pre-match mentor training, and 5) Confirm your availability and schedule prior to the program start date.

## **Do I have to complete and pass a background check?**

All mentors (new and returning) must complete and pass a criminal background check before they can start mentoring. Play Like a Girl has selected an approved background screening provider, Sterling Volunteers, to conduct background checks. The cost of the background check is approximately \$15 and is covered by the mentor.

## **How long does the matching process take?**

The mentor-mentee matching process begins in October of each school year and lasts several weeks. Our 2020 timeline may be extended as we await Department of Education decisions about the school calendar and whether students will attend school in-person, as a blended model, or fully virtual. Mentors are only eligible to be matched after they have completed all of the steps outlined above for becoming a Play Like a Girl mentor. After completing all the onboarding steps, the Program Coordinator will be in touch with you to give you more information about the timeframe.

## **Questions About Being a Mentor**

### **What is a Play Like a Girl mentor's role?**

A key part of your role as a mentor is to be a trusted and caring presence for your mentees. Positive, supportive relationships are central to Play Like a Girl's program and mission. Recognizing the significant risk of long-term loss that students are facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, the program will also include structured psychosocial support during the 2020-21 school year.

### **What makes a good mentor?**

A good mentor is a caring, consistent, and supportive coach and role model. Some qualities of successful mentors include being an active listener, patient, and open-minded. Play Like a Girl staff will be with you every step of the way to help you build a positive relationship with your mentee.

### **How do you match mentors with mentees?**

Play Like a Girl takes into account the experiences, backgrounds, interests, and schedules of our mentors and mentees when making matches.



## **How should my mentees and I spend our time during our virtual sessions?**

Play Like a Girl's virtual sessions begin and end as a full group of up to 10 mentor-mentee groups or mentoring circles composed of two co-mentors and 5-7 mentees each on Zoom, led and supervised by the Program Coordinator, a Networking Host and Facilitator. After checking in as a group, you and your mentees will be assigned to your own breakout room with the Program Coordinator only a click away for support. Additionally, a supervising mentor will pop in and out of your mentoring circle at times to oversee the interaction to ensure that mentees are safe and protected. In your one-on-one mentoring time, we encourage you and your mentees to check-in, complete a guided activity using our confidence-building curriculum, and then spend your remaining time talking, playing games, and/or working on a project together. We encourage mentors to follow their mentees' lead and allow them to have some choice in each session's activities. At the end of each session, the full group comes back together for 15 minutes of collective group discussion, Q&A and reflection.

## **What do I do if I have a problem or challenge with a mentee?**

Your Program Coordinator is always available as a resource to support you in your mentoring role. Please schedule a time to connect with your Program Coordinator about any issues or challenges that come up with your mentees. If you or your co-mentor are struggling during your session in your breakout room, press the "Ask for Help" button and the Program Coordinator or a supervising mentor will join your mentoring circle to facilitate solutions to any issues. The Program Coordinator is available to provide guidance and suggestions for your mentoring relationship during and/or outside of Meet + Mentor sessions.

## **What if I'm concerned about my mentee's well-being?**

If a mentee indicates in any way anything that makes you concerned about her well-being, report it immediately to your Program Coordinator or supervising mentor. Play Like a Girl has processes in place to report concerns to the school and the authorities.

## **Can I give a gift to my mentees?**

No, gifts are not appropriate in the Play Like a Girl mentoring program. You are welcome to make a donation to Play Like a Girl in honor of your mentee in lieu of a gift. Cards are also allowed.

## **Can I post photos of my mentees to social media?**

Yes, as long as your mentees' parent/guardian has authorized Play Like a Girl and her mentor to take and use photos, provided that no identifying characteristics about the minor are included. Please do not include your mentees' last names, locations or school names. Ask your Program Coordinator if your mentees have photo permission.

## **Can I mentor over the summer?**

No. At this time Meet + Mentor takes place during the school year only, from November to May. We currently offer summer camps for 5th and 6th grade students at our partner schools only.

## **Can I meet with my mentee outside of the program?**

No, Play Like a Girl does not facilitate any outside of program contact between mentors and mentees. This includes phone, email, social media or any other type of communication. It is against Play Like a Girl policy to ask your mentee to share their personal contact information with you or to be in contact with them outside of the program.

