

## How to find – or to be – a good mentor

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### Summary

Though perhaps not as emotionally challenging choosing a spouse, selecting a mentor can be every bit as daunting and may have consequences almost as dire. If you have chosen a career in research, whether it is clinical research or fundamental laboratory investigation, you should give some serious thought to the kind of career you want and then to the kind of mentor you choose to work with. For one reason or another, you may turn out to have few choices. In that case, this presentation may still be of value to you as I hope to provide some suggestions about how to approach your research career. You also may be the kind of trainee who is so talented and driven that you don't really need a mentor but even then, you can benefit from the right one. At any event, it is my goal to provide you with my perspective on how to choose a mentor and what kind of mentor might be right for you. First, you must be a good trainee; good mentors can be selective and most have limited interest in remedial education. Should you choose a large lab or a small lab, a senior highly visible mentor with a large research group or a promising young researcher who is just getting started and who will work closely with you? How do you decide which project is the best for you? What should you do if things are not working out well? When should you give up? I will review these points in some detail and if we all stay awake, perhaps some useful discussions will ensue.

### Recommended reading

Yewdell JW. How to succeed in science: a concise guide for young biomedical scientists. Part I: taking the plunge. Nat. Rev. Mol. Cell. Biol. 9:413-6,2008

Yewdell JW. How to succeed in science: a concise guide for young biomedical scientists. Part II: making discoveries. Nat Rev Mol Cell Biol 9: 491-4, 2008.

Angier, N. [The Canon](#)

Cronin AJ. [Shannon's Way](#)

Lewis, S. [Arrowsmith](#)

Homer. [The Iliad](#).