

DIGITAL BRIDGES: CONNECTING GENERATIONS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

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Facilitator's Guide for the Mentorship Programme



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Preface

This guide has been developed to support facilitators in delivering the Digital Bridges Mentorship Programme, a three-day training designed to prepare volunteers to become confident and compassionate digital mentors for older adults.

Across Europe, digital technologies are becoming an essential part of everyday life. Accessing public services, communicating with family and friends, managing healthcare appointments, or carrying out banking transactions increasingly requires digital skills. While many people have adapted to this rapid transformation, older adults often face barriers that extend beyond technology itself. Limited digital experience, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient learning opportunities can all contribute to digital exclusion.

The Digital Bridges project addresses these challenges by promoting intergenerational learning and empowering volunteers to support older adults in developing digital competences through patient, respectful, and learner-centred mentoring. The quality of this support begins with the quality of mentor preparation, making the role of the facilitator fundamental to the success of the programme.

As a facilitator, your responsibility extends beyond delivering content. You create a safe and inclusive learning environment where future mentors can develop not only the knowledge and practical skills required to teach digital competences, but also the attitudes and values that underpin effective mentoring, including empathy, active listening, encouragement, respect, and confidence-building. Through experiential learning, reflection, discussion, and practical activities, you will help participants prepare for meaningful mentoring relationships with older adults.

This guide is intended to support you throughout the implementation of the programme. It provides the learning objectives, session plans, facilitation guidance, practical activities, icebreakers, case studies, reflection exercises, and recommended methods for each training module. Rather than serving as a fixed script, it is designed as a flexible resource that can be adapted to the needs, experiences, and learning pace of different participant groups while maintaining the core principles and objectives of the Digital Bridges methodology.

The Digital Bridges partnership brings together organisations from Germany, Austria, Türkiye, and the Netherlands, united by a shared commitment to strengthening digital inclusion and fostering meaningful connections between generations. By preparing volunteers to become effective digital mentors, facilitators play a vital role in helping older adults gain confidence, independence, and active participation in an increasingly digital society.

Thank you for contributing your expertise, commitment, and enthusiasm to the Digital Bridges Mentorship Programme. Through your facilitation, you are not only delivering a training course you are helping to build bridges between generations and creating opportunities for lifelong learning, social inclusion, and digital participation.

Pınar Derya Akyazgan

Editor

About the Project

Digital Bridges: Connecting Generations through Technology is an Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership project that promotes digital inclusion by strengthening the digital competences of older adults through intergenerational learning and community engagement.

As digital technologies continue to transform everyday life, many older adults face barriers to accessing online services, communicating through digital platforms, and participating fully in society. These challenges are often linked not only to limited digital skills but also to a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient access to personalised learning opportunities.

The Digital Bridges project was developed to address these challenges by creating an innovative mentoring model in which trained volunteers support older adults in developing practical digital skills in a patient, respectful, and learner-centred way. The project recognises that digital inclusion is not solely about technology; it is also about fostering confidence, independence, social participation, and meaningful human connections.

To achieve these goals, the partnership has developed a comprehensive set of educational resources, including a needs analysis, a digital competence curriculum, training materials for older learners, a structured Mentorship Programme for volunteers, and practical guidance for facilitators delivering mentor training. These resources are designed to support organisations working with older adults and to ensure that high-quality digital learning opportunities can be implemented in different local contexts.

The project is implemented by a consortium of organisations from **Germany, Austria, Türkiye, and the Netherlands**, combining expertise in adult education, youth work, digital learning, community development, and non-formal education. Through close collaboration, the partners aim to promote inclusive learning environments where different generations learn from and support one another.

The **Mentorship Programme** represents one of the project's core components. By preparing volunteers to become empathetic and competent digital mentors, the programme contributes to sustainable community-based support systems that extend beyond the duration of the project itself. Facilitators play a central role in this process by equipping future mentors with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence needed to support older adults effectively.

Ultimately, Digital Bridges seeks to create stronger communities where technology becomes a tool for connection rather than a source of exclusion. By empowering both mentors and older learners, the project contributes to greater digital participation, lifelong learning, active ageing, and social inclusion across Europe.

The Mentorship Training Programme

The **Digital Bridges Mentorship Training Programme** is a three-day non-formal education programme designed to prepare volunteers to become confident, empathetic, and effective digital mentors for older adults. As a facilitator, your role is to guide participants through a structured learning journey that combines knowledge, practical experience, reflection, and skills development.

Rather than focusing solely on digital competences, the programme also develops the interpersonal and mentoring skills that enable volunteers to create supportive and respectful learning relationships with older adults. Throughout the training, participants are encouraged to learn by doing, reflect on their experiences, and gradually build the confidence needed to mentor independently.

Day 1 – Building the Foundations

The first day focuses on establishing a common understanding of the Digital Bridges project, the principles of intergenerational learning, and the role of volunteer mentors. Participants explore the challenges older adults may experience in digital environments and begin developing essential mentoring competences such as empathy, active listening, effective communication, patience, and encouragement.

As a facilitator, your objective is to create a safe, inclusive, and participatory learning environment where participants feel comfortable sharing experiences, asking questions, and reflecting on their own attitudes towards mentoring.

Day 2 – Exploring the Curriculum

The second day introduces participants to the Digital Bridges curriculum and its learning modules. Volunteers become familiar with the educational materials, learning resources, digital tools, and mentoring methods they will use when supporting older adults.

Practical activities, demonstrations, small-group work, and simulated learning situations enable participants to experience the curriculum from both the learner's and the mentor's perspectives. Accessibility, inclusion, and learner-centred approaches should be emphasised throughout the day to ensure participants understand how to adapt their support to different learning needs.

Day 3 – Practice and Preparation for Mentoring

The final day focuses on applying everything participants have learned. Through role plays, mentoring simulations, case studies, peer feedback, and reflective discussions, volunteers practise responding to realistic mentoring situations before working with older adults.

Facilitators should encourage constructive feedback, critical reflection, and collaborative learning, helping participants recognise both their strengths and areas for further development. By the end of the programme, volunteers should feel prepared to begin mentoring with confidence while recognising that learning and professional growth continue throughout the mentoring experience.

Each training day combines short presentations, experiential learning activities, discussions, collaborative exercises, and reflection sessions. This balance between theory and practice reflects the core philosophy of the Digital Bridges project: effective mentoring is developed through experience, interaction, and continuous reflection rather than through knowledge acquisition alone.

This guide provides the structure, activities, facilitation notes, and practical resources required to deliver the programme successfully while allowing facilitators the flexibility to adapt sessions to the needs and experiences of their participant group.

How to Use This Facilitator's Guide

This guide has been designed as a practical resource to support facilitators in delivering the **Digital Bridges Mentorship Training Programme**. Rather than serving as a fixed script, it provides a flexible framework that can be adapted to the needs, backgrounds, and learning pace of different participant groups while maintaining the programme's learning objectives.

Each training session includes clear learning outcomes, suggested timing, facilitation guidance, recommended methods, required materials, and practical activities. Facilitators are encouraged to review each session in advance and prepare any resources or equipment needed before the training begins.

The activities included in this guide are based on the principles of non-formal education and experiential learning. Encourage active participation, collaboration, reflection, and peer learning throughout the programme. While presentations provide essential knowledge, the greatest learning takes place through discussion, practical exercises, role plays, simulations, and shared experiences.

The suggested timings are intended as guidance and may be adjusted according to the group's size, experience, and level of engagement. Some participants may require additional opportunities for discussion or practice, while others may progress more quickly. Maintaining flexibility while ensuring that all learning outcomes are achieved is one of the facilitator's key responsibilities.

Throughout the programme, create a learning environment that is safe, respectful, inclusive, and supportive. Encourage participants to ask questions, share experiences, and learn from one another. Remember that the programme aims not only to develop digital mentoring skills but also to strengthen empathy, communication, patience, confidence, and the ability to build meaningful relationships with older adults.

Finally, use this guide as a source of inspiration rather than a checklist. Adapt examples to your local context, draw upon your own facilitation experience, and respond to the needs of your participants. The combination of structured planning and responsive facilitation will help create a meaningful learning experience and prepare volunteers to become effective digital mentors.

Mentorship Training Program Overview



Day 1 – Orientation & Foundations

Detailed Session Schedule

Below is an hour-by-hour session plan for Day 1, totaling approximately **6 hours** (including breaks). This can be shortened or extended as needed.

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
09:00–09:30	Opening & Introductions	Welcome, volunteers get to know each other (name, motivation sharing)	Ice-breaker / introduction round	30 min
09:30–10:15	Session 1: Introduction to the Digital Bridges Project	Project background, objectives, partner organizations, the volunteer's role in the bigger picture	Presentation or short video/visual material	45 min
10:15–10:30	Break			15 min
10:30–11:30	Session 2: Understanding Elderly Learners	Digital anxiety, differences in learning pace, fear of forgetting, physical limitations (vision/hearing), past negative experiences	Case examples + small group discussion	60 min

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
11:30–12:30	Session 3: Empathy Exercise	"Seeing through the eyes of an elderly person" – short simulation (e.g., using a touchscreen with gloves on, reading text through blurred glasses)	Experiential simulation	60 min
12:30–13:30	Lunch Break	—	—	60 min
13:30–14:30	Session 4: Core Mentorship Skills	Empathy, patience, active listening; adopting the "facilitator" role rather than "teacher"	Mini-lecture + role-play examples	60 min
14:30–15:15	Session 5: Positive Feedback & Encouragement Techniques	How to praise effectively, how to respond to mistakes, preventing loss of motivation	Role-play (pair work)	45 min
15:15–15:30	Break	—	—	15 min
15:30–16:15	Session 6: Case Discussion / Group Work	Group discussion on sample difficult scenarios ("What would you do if a participant became frustrated?")	Small group work + sharing	45 min
16:15–16:30	Closing of the Day	Day summary, overview of tomorrow's program, Q&A	Brief evaluation round	15 min

Session Details

Session 1 – Introduction to the Digital Bridges Project

Purpose: To help volunteers understand *why* the project exists and the importance of their own role.

Content: Partner organizations, target group, work packages, expected impact.

Session 2 – Understanding Elderly Learners

Purpose: To build an empathy-based perspective.

Content: Causes and consequences of the age-related digital divide; the "different learner" rather than "slow learner" mindset.

Session 3 – Empathy Exercise

Purpose: To reinforce theoretical knowledge experientially.

Content: Short physical/sensory simulations to let volunteers personally feel the challenges elderly individuals face when using devices.

Session 4 – Core Mentorship Skills

Purpose: To help volunteers embrace the role of "guide" rather than "information provider."

Content: Active listening techniques, patient guidance, effective questioning strategies.

Session 5 – Positive Feedback & Encouragement

Purpose: To equip volunteers with a communication style that protects and boosts participant confidence.

Content: Correcting mistakes without criticism, celebrating small achievements.

Session 6 – Case Discussion

Purpose: To reinforce learning through realistic scenarios.

Content: Group problem-solving for potential challenges (this also lays the groundwork for the "Crisis Scenarios" segment in Day 3).

Methods and Activities

Day 1/ Session 1:

Ice-breaker: "My Digital Bridge"

Purpose: Connects personally to the project's theme while helping volunteers introduce themselves.

Instructions:

1. Each volunteer briefly shares:
 - Their name
 - One digital skill they find is easy (e.g., "I'm great at video calls")
 - One person in their life (grandparent, elderly neighbor, etc.) who struggles with technology, and why they decided to volunteer
2. Facilitator writes each person's "easy skill" on a board/flipchart — this can later be referenced when forming module-specific practice pairs.

Duration: 10–15 minutes (for a group of 15–20 volunteers)

Why it works: It immediately grounds volunteers in empathy and personal motivation — setting the emotional tone for the rest of Day 1.

Day 1/ Session 2: Understanding Elderly Learners

5 Case Examples

Case 1: "The Password Loop"

Mrs. Ayşe, 74, has forgotten her email password three times in the past month. Each time, she has to ask her granddaughter to reset it. She has started avoiding using email altogether, saying "I'm just not good at this, maybe I should stop trying." She feels embarrassed every time she has to ask for help.

Case 2: "Too Fast to Follow"

Mr. Klaus, 68, joined a free smartphone workshop at a community center. The trainer moved quickly through the slides, assuming everyone could keep up. Klaus fell behind after the second step, felt too embarrassed to ask the trainer to slow down, and quietly left before the session ended.

Case 3: "The Fear of Breaking It"

Mrs. Fatma, 80, was given a tablet by her son. She keeps it in its box most of the time because she's afraid that if she presses the wrong button, she'll "break something" or "delete everything." She rarely tries new features on her own.

Case 4: "Hearing and Reading Difficulties"

Mr. Johan, 71, has mild hearing loss and finds small text on screens hard to read. During a video call demo, he missed key instructions because he couldn't hear clearly, and he didn't want to interrupt to ask the trainer to repeat it.

Case 5: "The Isolated Learner"

Mrs. Elif, 77, has lived alone since her husband passed away. Her only regular contact with her children is through video calls, but she doesn't know how to make one herself, she always waits for her children to call her. She has expressed that learning this skill "would change everything" for her, but she's nervous to start.

10 Discussion Questions

1. In Case 1 (Mrs. Ayşe), what underlying emotion is driving her avoidance of email, and how would you respond as a mentor in that moment?
2. In Case 2 (Mr. Klaus), what could the trainer have done differently to prevent him from leaving the session? What does this teach us about pacing?

3. Have you ever seen someone, a family member, neighbor, or friend react the way Mrs. Fatma does in Case 3 (fear of "breaking" the device)? How did you (or could you) reassure them?
4. In Case 4 (Mr. Johan), what accessibility adjustments could a mentor make *before* a session even begins, to prevent this situation?
5. In Case 5 (Mrs. Elif), how might a mentor motivate a hesitant learner who has strong personal motivation but low confidence?
6. Across all five cases, what common emotional barrier (fear, shame, anxiety, isolation) do you notice repeating? Why do you think this is so common among elderly learners?
7. Which of these five cases feels most relatable to your own experience either as someone who has taught tech to an older person, or as someone who has struggled to learn something new yourself?
8. If you only had 5 minutes with each of these five individuals before starting a lesson, what is the *one* thing you would prioritize saying or doing?
9. How might cultural background or family dynamics (e.g., relying on grandchildren) influence how comfortable an elderly person feels asking for help?
10. As a mentor, how do you plan to balance patience and encouragement with helping the person make real progress without either rushing them or being *too* cautious to challenge them?

Day 1/ Session 3: Empathy Exercise

"Seeing Through the Eyes of an Elderly Person" – Experiential Simulation

Duration: 60 minutes **Format:** Rotating stations (small groups of 3–4 volunteers)

Purpose: To let volunteers physically and sensorially experience the barriers elderly participants face when using digital devices building embodied empathy rather than theoretical understanding alone.

Materials Needed

Item	Purpose	Quantity (for ~16–20 volunteers)
Thick gardening/winter gloves	Simulate reduced finger dexterity/motor control	4–5 pairs
Vaseline-smeared clear glasses (or blurred/fogged safety glasses)	Simulate low vision / cataracts	4–5 pairs

Item	Purpose	Quantity (for ~16–20 volunteers)
Earplugs or noise-cancelling headphones with white noise	Simulate hearing loss	4–5 sets
Smartphones/tablets (any spare devices)	Task devices for simulation	4–5 devices
Printed task cards	Instructions for each station	1 set per station
Small text handouts (8pt font, low contrast)	Simulate reading difficulty	Several copies
Stopwatch/timer	Time-limited tasks to increase pressure	1

Station Setup (4 Rotating Stations, ~12 minutes each)

Station 1 – "Clumsy Fingers" (Motor Skill Simulation)

Setup: Volunteers wear thick gloves. **Task:** Using a smartphone, they must:

- Unlock the phone with a PIN code
- Open a messaging app and type a short sentence
- Take a photo and send it

What it simulates: Reduced fine motor control, common with arthritis or age-related dexterity loss.

Station 2 – "Blurry World" (Vision Simulation)

Setup: Volunteers wear Vaseline-smeared or fogged glasses. **Task:**

- Read a short paragraph of small text (provided handout, 8pt font)
- Find and tap a specific small icon on a phone screen (e.g., "Settings")
- Fill out a short form field on a website/app

What it simulates: Cataracts, macular degeneration, or general age-related vision decline.

Station 3 – "Muffled Instructions" (Hearing Simulation)

Setup: Volunteers wear earplugs or headphones playing white noise. **Task:**

- A "mentor" (another volunteer or trainer) gives verbal instructions for a task (e.g., "open your email and reply to the second message") *without repeating or raising their voice*
- The volunteer must attempt to follow the instructions based on what they could hear

What it simulates: Hearing loss combined with a mentor who doesn't adjust their communication style.

Station 4 – "Under Pressure" (Time & Confidence Simulation)

Setup: No physical impairment simulated instead, a strict timer.

Task: Volunteers are given an unfamiliar app/website and a task (e.g., "find and enable dark mode") with only **60 seconds**, while an observer stands close and says things like "Just tap there no, not there, THERE."

What it simulates: The anxiety and pressure elderly learners feel when rushed or hovered over, even without any physical impairment.

Facilitation Notes

- Rotate groups every ~12 minutes (4 stations × 12 min = 48 min + 12 min buffer for transitions)
- At each station, place a **task card** with clear instructions so volunteers can proceed with minimal facilitator intervention
- Encourage volunteers to genuinely attempt the task rather than rush through it "for show" remind them the goal is to *feel* the frustration, not just observe it

Debrief Discussion (10–15 minutes, after all stations)

1. Which station felt the most frustrating, and why?
2. Did you feel a temptation to give up at any point? What stopped you (or didn't)?
3. At Station 4, how did the observer's hovering and rushed instructions ("no, not there, THERE") make you feel? Did it help or hurt your performance?
4. Based on this experience, what is one thing you will *never* do as a mentor?
5. What is one thing you will *always* do differently now, having felt this yourself?

Facilitator Closing Line

"What you just experienced for 12 minutes at each station, some of our elderly participants experience every single time they pick up a device. Today's exercise isn't about pity — it's about respect for how much courage it takes them to keep trying."

Session 4: Core Mentorship Skills

Mini-Lecture + Role-Play

Duration: 60 minutes **Format:** Short mini-lecture (20 min) + role-play practice in pairs (35 min) + debrief (5 min) **Purpose:** To help volunteers shift from an "instructor" mindset to a "facilitator" mindset guiding elderly learners to discover and practice at their own pace, rather than simply transferring information.

Part 1: Mini-Lecture (20 minutes)

1. The "Facilitator" vs. "Teacher" Mindset

Teacher Mindset (Avoid)	Facilitator Mindset (Adopt)
Let me do it for you, it's faster	Let's try it together, step by step
Talks continuously, explains everything at once	Pauses, checks understanding, asks questions
Corrects mistakes immediately	Lets the learner try again before stepping in
Focuses on completing the task	Focuses on the learner's confidence and understanding

Key message: *A good mentor's goal is not to finish the task quickly it's to help the learner feel capable of doing it themselves next time.*

2. Active Listening

Three simple techniques volunteers should practice:

- **Reflecting back:** Repeating or summarizing what the learner said ("So you're saying the icon is hard to find, right?")
- **Pausing before responding:** Giving the learner time to finish their thought without interrupting
- **Reading non-verbal cues:** Noticing signs of confusion, frustration, or fatigue (frowning, sighing, going quiet) and responding to them, not just to words

3. Patient Guidance

- **Wait time:** After giving an instruction, wait at least 5–10 seconds before repeating or stepping in — this feels long, but it's essential
- **One step at a time:** Break every task into the smallest possible steps; never give more than one instruction at once
- **Repeat without judgment:** If asked the same question three times, answer it the same way, calmly, each time

4. Effective Questioning Strategies

Instead of giving direct answers, mentors should ask guiding questions:

Instead of saying...	Try asking...
"Click the blue button."	"What do you think happens if you tap that blue button?"
"No, that's wrong, try again."	"What do you see happening on the screen right now?"
"You need to type your password here."	"What do you think this box is asking you to enter?"

Key message: *Questions build confidence and memory retention. Direct answers create dependency.*

Part 2: Role-Play Practice (35 minutes)

Setup

Volunteers work in pairs. One plays the "**elderly learner**," the other plays the "**mentor**." Roles switch halfway through.

Role-Play Scenarios (choose 2 per pair, ~8 minutes each + short feedback)

Scenario A – "The Repeated Question" The "learner" asks the same question three times in a row ("Wait, where do I click again?"). The "mentor" must answer patiently each time, without showing frustration, using guiding questions instead of just repeating the direct answer.

Scenario B – "The Silent Struggler" The "learner" is quietly stuck and doesn't ask for help just stares at the screen, visibly frustrated but silent. The "mentor" must notice the non-verbal cues and gently check in without being condescending.

Scenario C – "I Can't Do This" The "learner" says, "I'm too old for this, I'll never learn it" and wants to give up. The "mentor" must respond with encouragement without dismissing the learner's feelings or being falsely cheerful.

Scenario D – "The Impatient Learner" The "learner" wants the mentor to just do the task for them ("Just click it for me, it's faster"). The "mentor" must gently insist on guiding rather than doing, while staying respectful.

Observer Role (optional, if working in groups of 3)

A third volunteer observes and gives brief feedback after each round using this simple checklist:

- ☒ Did the mentor use guiding questions instead of direct instructions?
- ☒ Did the mentor wait before jumping in?

☒ Did the mentor stay calm and non-judgmental?

☒ Did the mentor notice non-verbal cues?

Part 3: Debrief (5 minutes)

Quick group share-out (2–3 volunteers):

1. Which scenario felt hardest to handle, and why?
2. What is one question-based phrase you'll try to use instead of giving a direct answer?

Facilitator Closing Line

"Today you practiced holding back the instinct to 'just do it for them.' That instinct comes from a good place — but real mentorship means giving someone the space to struggle a little, so they can succeed on their own."

Session 5: Positive Feedback & Encouragement Techniques

Role-Play (Pair Work)

Duration: 45 minutes **Format:** Short mini-lecture (15 min) + role-play in pairs (25 min) + debrief (5 min) **Purpose:** To equip volunteers with a communication style that protects and builds participant confidence correcting mistakes without criticism and celebrating small achievements.

Part 1: Mini-Lecture (15 minutes)

1. Why Feedback Style Matters for Elderly Learners

Many elderly participants already carry internalized beliefs like *"I'm too old for this"* or *"I'll never understand technology."* Poorly delivered feedback even well-intentioned can confirm these beliefs and cause them to give up. The way a mentor responds to a mistake often matters more than the mistake itself.

2. The "Sandwich Avoidance" Principle

Many trainers use the classic "praise–criticism–praise" sandwich, but with anxious learners this can feel insincere or confusing. Instead, we recommend:

The "Effort + Redirect" Method:

1. Acknowledge the effort or attempt (not just the outcome)
2. Redirect gently toward the correct action — framed as information, not correction

3. Avoid the word "wrong" use "let's try this" instead

Avoid	Use Instead
"No, that's wrong."	"Almost — let's try tapping a bit higher."
"You made a mistake."	"That's a common mix-up, let's look at it together."
"I already showed you this."	"Let's go through it one more time, no problem."

3. Celebrating Small Wins

Progress for elderly learners is often incremental and easy to overlook. Mentors should actively notice and name small achievements:

- "You found that icon on your own this time that's real progress!"
- "Last week this took you five minutes, today it took two."
- "You just helped yourself out of a mistake without asking me that's exactly the skill we want to build."

Key message: *Specific praise ("you found it yourself") is more powerful than generic praise ("good job").*

4. Responding to Frustration or Self-Criticism

When a learner says things like *"I'm hopeless at this"* or *"I'll never get it,"* mentors should:

- Acknowledge the feeling without agreeing with the self-judgment ("I can see this is frustrating")
- Reframe the struggle as normal ("This part trips up almost everyone at first")
- Redirect toward the next small step, not the whole task

Part 2: Role-Play Practice (25 minutes, pair work)

Setup

Volunteers work in pairs, switching roles halfway through ("mentor" and "learner"). Each round is followed by 2–3 minutes of quick feedback between partners.

Role-Play Scenarios (choose 2 per pair)

Scenario A – "The Mistake" The "learner" taps the wrong button and accidentally closes an important screen, visibly annoyed with themselves. The "mentor" must respond using the Effort + Redirect method — without saying "wrong" or "no."

Scenario B – "The Small Win" The "learner" successfully completes a small step independently (e.g., finding a setting) but doesn't seem to notice it as an achievement. The "mentor" must recognize and name this progress specifically and genuinely.

Scenario C – "I'll Never Get This" The "learner" becomes self-critical mid-task ("I'm hopeless, my grandchildren do this instantly"). The "mentor" must acknowledge the feeling, normalize the struggle, and gently redirect to the next step.

Scenario D – "Repeated Correction Needed" The "learner" makes the same small mistake for the third time in a row. The "mentor" must stay encouraging and consistent, without showing impatience or sounding repetitive/robotic.

Quick Partner Feedback Checklist (after each round)

- ☒ Did the mentor avoid the word "wrong"?
- ☒ Did the mentor acknowledge effort before redirecting?
- ☒ Was praise specific rather than generic?
- ☒ Did the mentor's tone stay warm and non-judgmental throughout?

Part 3: Debrief (5 minutes)

Quick group share-out (2–3 volunteers):

1. What was harder — giving encouragement or avoiding the word "wrong"?
2. Share one specific praise phrase you'll try to use in real sessions.

Facilitator Closing Line

"The words we choose in a moment of mistake can either close a door or open one. Today's goal wasn't to learn magic phrases it's to build the habit of leading with encouragement, every single time."

Session 6: Case Discussion / Group Work

Small Group Problem-Solving + Sharing

Duration: 45 minutes

Format: Small groups (3–4 people) work on assigned scenarios (20 min) → each group shares back to the full group (20 min) → closing (5 min)

Purpose: To consolidate the day's learning (empathy, mentorship skills, feedback techniques) by applying it to realistic, challenging scenarios and to lay the groundwork for the Crisis Scenarios exercise on Day 3.

Setup

- Divide volunteers into 4–5 small groups
- Each group receives **one scenario card** (below) with a set of guiding questions
- Groups discuss and prepare a short response plan (who says what, what they'd do first, second, etc.)
- Each group presents their scenario and solution to the full group (2–3 minutes per group)

Scenario Cards

Scenario 1: "The Sudden Shutdown"

Mid-session, a participant's tablet suddenly freezes and turns off. The participant looks alarmed and says, "Did I break it? What did I do?"

Guiding questions:

- What is your first sentence to the participant?
- How do you balance reassurance with actually solving the technical problem?
- What could you have done *before* the session to reduce this kind of panic?

Scenario 2: "Comparing to Grandchildren"

A participant says, "My grandson does this in two seconds. I feel so stupid next to him." The mood in the room shifts, and other participants nod in agreement.

Guiding questions:

- How do you respond to this comment without dismissing the feeling?
- How might you reframe the comparison in a way the whole group can hear?
- What long-term message do you want participants to internalize about their pace of learning?

Scenario 3: "The Participant Who Won't Ask for Help"

You notice a participant has been stuck on the same step for several minutes, but they haven't said anything and seem to be quietly struggling, perhaps out of pride or embarrassment.

Guiding questions:

- How do you approach them without making them feel singled out or embarrassed?
- What specific words would you use to open the conversation?

- How is this different from a participant who openly asks for help?

Scenario 4: "Losing Patience with Repetition"

You've now explained the same step for the fourth time to the same participant in one session, and you notice your own patience running low.

Guiding questions:

- What internal strategies can you use to reset your patience in the moment?
- Is it ever appropriate to suggest a short break? How would you offer that?
- What does this scenario teach us about mentor self-awareness?

Scenario 5: "The Participant Who Wants to Quit"

A participant closes their device and says, "I don't think I'm going to come back to this. It's not for me."

Guiding questions:

- What is your immediate response, in the moment?
- Do you try to change their mind, or respect their decision? How do you decide?
- What would you say to them as they leave, to leave the door open for the future?

Full-Group Sharing (20 minutes)

Each group briefly presents:

1. The scenario they discussed
2. Their proposed response/approach
3. One key insight the group agreed on

The facilitator notes recurring themes on a flipchart/whiteboard these will be revisited on Day 3 during the formal Crisis Scenarios exercise.

Closing (5 minutes)

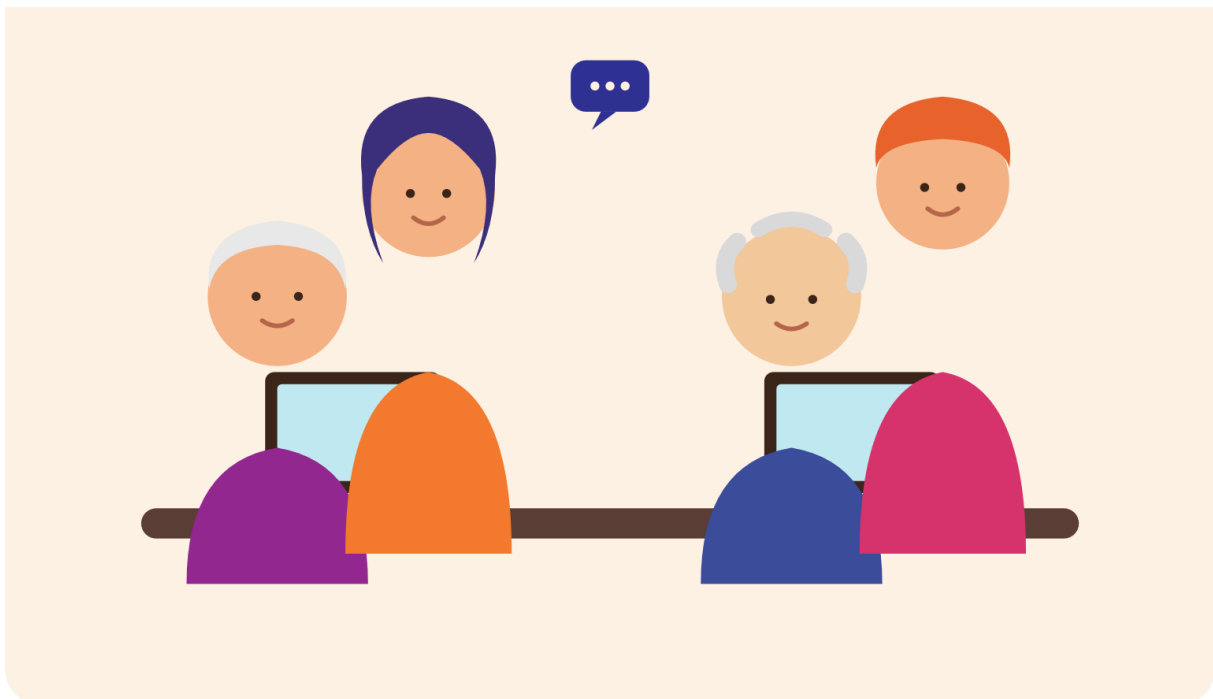
Facilitator Closing Line

"Every scenario you just discussed will happen — not might happen, will happen — at some point during your mentorship. Today, you're building a mental toolkit so that when it does happen, you respond instead of react."

Bridge to Day 1 wrap-up:

"Tomorrow, we'll dive into the curriculum itself. But everything we practiced today — empathy, patience, encouragement, and calm problem-solving is the foundation that makes the curriculum actually work."

Day 2 – Curriculum & Practice



Detailed Session Schedule

Below is an hour-by-hour session plan for Day 2, totaling approximately **6.5 hours** (including breaks). The 10 modules are grouped into three clusters to make the review manageable and interactive rather than a long lecture.

Overview Schedule

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
09:00–09:15	Day 1 Recap	Quick recap of empathy, mentorship skills, and feedback techniques	Short group Q&A	15 min
09:15–10:00	Session 1: Modules 1–3 Overview	Basic Device Handling, Safe Internet Navigation, Communication Skills	Interactive walkthrough + short demo	45 min
10:00–10:15	 Break	—	—	15 min
10:15–11:15	Session 2: Modules 4–6 Overview	Managing Digital Accounts & Privacy, Online Shopping & Transactions, E-Government & Online Services	Interactive walkthrough + short demo	60 min
11:15–12:15	Session 3: Modules 7–10 Overview	Digital Well-being & Mental Health, Intergenerational Learning, Accessibility & Ergonomics, Troubleshooting & Lifelong Learning	Interactive walkthrough + short demo	60 min
12:15–13:15	 Lunch Break	—	—	60 min
13:15–14:00	Session 4: Materials & Online Platform Walkthrough	Guides, visual aids, online learning platform navigation, progress tracking, reporting	Live platform demo + guided practice	45 min
14:00–14:45	Session 5: Hands-On Activity Walkthrough	Volunteers practice delivering 2–3 signature curriculum activities themselves	Hands-on activity rehearsal (small groups)	45 min
14:45–15:00	Break	—	—	15 min
15:00–16:00	Session 6: Accessibility & Inclusion Basics	Adapting sessions for vision/hearing/motor limitations; assistive tools overview	Interactive workshop +	60 min

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
			hands-on tool demo	
16:00–16:30	Closing & Q&A	Recap of the 10 modules, open questions, transition to Day 3	Group discussion	30 min

Session Details

Day 1 Recap (15 minutes)

A brief, energizing recap to reconnect volunteers with the emotional foundation built on Day 1 before moving into curriculum content. Facilitator asks 2–3 volunteers to share one takeaway from Day 1 in one sentence each.

Session 1: Modules 1–3 Overview (45 minutes)

Modules covered: Basic Device Handling · Safe Internet Navigation · Communication Skills

For each module, the facilitator presents:

- The module's **purpose** (what skill gap it addresses)
- Its **key activities** (e.g., "Device Scavenger Hunt," "Spot the Scam," "Message Relay")
- The **recommended methodology** (hands-on practice, gamification, role-play)

Interactive element: Volunteers briefly try one activity from each module themselves in pairs (e.g., a 5-minute "Spot the Scam" mini-round using sample screenshots), so they experience it from the learner's seat before later teaching it.

Session 2: Modules 4–6 Overview (60 minutes)

Modules covered: Managing Digital Accounts & Privacy · Online Shopping & Transactions · E-Government & Online Services

Same structure as Session 1 (purpose → activities → methodology), with slightly more time given the sensitivity and complexity of these topics (privacy risks, financial transactions, official government portals).

Interactive element: A short live demo of a mock online purchase ("Shop Smart") and a sample e-government form ("Digital Form Filling"), so volunteers see exactly what participants will encounter.

Session 3: Modules 7–10 Overview (60 minutes)

Modules covered: Digital Well-being & Mental Health · Intergenerational Learning & Collaboration · Accessibility & Ergonomic Digital Use · Troubleshooting & Lifelong Learning

Same structure as previous sessions. Special attention is given to:

- **Module 8 (Intergenerational Learning):** since this connects directly to the volunteers' own role as mentors ("Teach Me, I Teach You," "Community Stories")
- **Module 10 (Troubleshooting):** emphasizing the "guide, don't fix" philosophy from Day 1's Core Mentorship Skills session

Interactive element: Small group discussion "Which of these four modules do you feel most confident delivering, and which feels most challenging?"

Session 4: Materials & Online Platform Walkthrough (45 minutes)

Purpose: Practical, hands-on familiarity with the tools volunteers will actually use during real sessions.

Content:

- Overview of printed/digital guides and visual aids for each module
- Live demo of the online learning platform: logging in, navigating modules, accessing activity instructions
- How to track a participant's progress
- How to submit post-session reports/notes

Method: Facilitator demonstrates live on-screen, then volunteers log in themselves and complete a short guided task (e.g., "find Module 5's materials and locate the reporting form").

Session 5: Hands-On Activity Walkthrough (45 minutes)

Purpose: Move from *observing* to *doing* — volunteers rehearse actually delivering activities, not just learning about them.

Format: In small groups of 3, volunteers take turns delivering one signature activity to their peers (acting as "participants"), chosen from the curriculum — for example:

- "Follow the Guide" (Module 1)
- "Build a Strong Password" (Module 4)
- "Government Services Tour" (Module 6)

Method: Each mini-delivery is followed by 2–3 minutes of peer feedback, focused on clarity of instructions and pacing (not on curriculum accuracy, since this is a first attempt).

Session 6: Accessibility & Inclusion Basics (60 minutes)

Purpose: Building on the empathy foundation from Day 1's simulation exercise, this session provides concrete, practical accessibility knowledge tied directly to Module 9 of the curriculum.

Content:

- Adjusting device settings: font size, screen contrast, volume, brightness
- Introduction to assistive tools: screen readers, voice commands, magnification
- Ergonomic setup basics: seating, device positioning, lighting
- When and how to suggest an accessibility adjustment without making the participant feel singled out

Method: Hands-on stations where volunteers try adjusting accessibility settings on real devices (similar format to Day 1's empathy simulation, but focused on *solutions* rather than *experiencing barriers*).

Closing & Q&A (30 minutes)

Facilitator leads a group recap of all 10 modules (quick round: "name one activity from each module"), addresses open questions, and previews Day 3's focus: **micro-mentoring practice and certification**.

Facilitator Closing Line

"You now know what to teach. Tomorrow, we focus on how you'll actually deliver it — through practice, feedback, and handling the unexpected."

Day 3 – Rehearsal & Certification



Detailed Session Schedule

Below is an hour-by-hour session plan for Day 3, totaling approximately **6 hours** (including breaks). This day shifts from *learning* to *doing* – volunteers rehearse full mentoring sessions, handle simulated crises, and complete the program.

Overview Schedule

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
09:00–09:15	Day 2 Recap	Quick recap of the 10 modules and platform use	Short group Q&A	15 min
09:15–10:45	Session 1: Micro-Mentoring Practice (Round 1)	Volunteers deliver a short mini-session to a peer "learner"	Peer teaching + observed practice	90 min
10:45–11:00	Break	—	—	15 min
11:00–11:45	Session 2: Structured Feedback	Feedback on Round 1 performances	Guided peer + facilitator feedback	45 min
11:45–12:45	Session 3: Micro-Mentoring Practice (Round 2)	Second round, applying feedback from Round 1	Peer teaching + observed practice	60 min

Time	Session	Content	Method	Duration
12:45– 13:45	Lunch Break	—	—	60 min
13:45– 14:45	Session 4: Crisis/Difficulty Scenarios	Simulated challenging situations (technical failure, frustration, communication breakdown)	Role-play in small groups	60 min
14:45– 15:00	Break	—	—	15 min
15:00– 15:45	Session 5: Final Evaluation	Individual readiness assessment	Self-assessment + facilitator checklist	45 min
15:45– 16:30	Session 6: Certification & Closing	Certificate distribution, matching preview, next steps	Ceremony + closing circle	45 min

Session Details

Day 2 Recap (15 minutes)

Quick round: each volunteer names one module and one activity from it, to confirm curriculum familiarity before moving into practice.

Session 1: Micro-Mentoring Practice – Round 1 (90 minutes)

Purpose: Give every volunteer a full, realistic mentoring rehearsal not just isolated activity snippets like in Day 2, but a complete mini-session from start to finish.

Format: Groups of 3 (rotating roles: **mentor**, **elderly learner**, **observer**)

- Each volunteer delivers one **10–12 minute mini-session** covering a single activity of their choice from the curriculum (e.g., "Password Check-up," "Video Call Challenge")
- The "learner" is asked to act somewhat realistically including mild hesitation, a repeated question, or a small mistake to make the rehearsal meaningful
- The "observer" uses a simple checklist (see below) and gives 3–5 minutes of feedback after each session
- Roles rotate so everyone practices being the mentor at least once

Observer Checklist:

- Used guiding questions instead of direct instructions
- Waited before jumping in to help
- Gave specific, encouraging feedback (not generic praise)
- Stayed calm and patient throughout
- Adapted pace to the "learner's" needs

Session 2: Structured Feedback (45 minutes)

Purpose: Consolidate learning from Round 1 before a second, improved attempt.

Format:

- Each small group briefly discusses: what went well, and what felt hardest
- Facilitator collects 2–3 recurring challenges from across the room and addresses them briefly with the full group (e.g., "several of you found it hard not to just answer the question directly let's revisit the guiding-question technique")
- Volunteers individually write down **one specific thing** they will do differently in Round 2

Session 3: Micro-Mentoring Practice – Round 2 (60 minutes)

Purpose: Apply the feedback from Round 1 in a second, improved rehearsal.

Format: Same as Round 1, but shorter (roles rotate again, sessions can be slightly shorter 8–10 minutes each) since volunteers are now more confident. Observers focus specifically on whether the individual's "one thing to improve" from Session 2 was visibly applied.

Session 4: Crisis/Difficulty Scenarios (60 minutes)

Purpose: Prepare volunteers for the unexpected moments that will inevitably arise during real mentoring sessions building on the scenarios first raised in Day 1's Session 6.

Format: Small groups rotate through short scenario role-plays (10 minutes each, 3 scenarios per group):

Scenario A – "Technical Failure Mid-Session" The device suddenly freezes/crashes while the participant is in the middle of a task. The "mentor" must stay calm, reassure the participant, and decide whether to troubleshoot or pivot to another activity.

Scenario B – "Emotional Frustration" The participant becomes visibly upset, saying "I told you, I can't do this, why am I even trying." The "mentor" must respond with empathy without

being dismissive or overly cheerful, and decide whether to continue, pause, or end the session early.

Scenario C – "Communication Breakdown" The participant seems to misunderstand repeated instructions, possibly due to hearing difficulty or unclear phrasing. The "mentor" must recognize the breakdown and adjust their communication approach (simplify language, check hearing/visibility, slow down).

Debrief (last 10 minutes of session): Quick group share "Which scenario would you find hardest in real life, and what's your go-to first response now?"

Session 5: Final Evaluation (45 minutes)

Purpose: Assess each volunteer's readiness to begin mentoring, using both self-reflection and facilitator observation gathered across the day.

Components:

1. **Self-assessment form** volunteers rate their own confidence across key areas (curriculum knowledge, patience, communication, handling difficulty) and note one area they want extra support on
2. **Facilitator checklist** — based on observations from Sessions 1, 3, and 4, facilitators confirm each volunteer has demonstrated core competencies
3. **Optional short 1:1 check-in** — for any volunteer flagged as needing additional support before matching with a participant

Session 6: Certification & Closing (45 minutes)

Purpose: Formally close the training program, celebrate volunteers' commitment, and set expectations for what comes next.

Content:

- Distribution of the "**Digital Bridges Mentor Certificate**"
- Brief overview of the matching process (how volunteers will be paired with elderly participants)
- Introduction to the post-training support system: online mentor community/forum, quick-reference guide, advisory access (WP3.3)
- Closing circle: each volunteer shares one word describing how they feel about starting their mentorship

Facilitator Closing Line

"You didn't just learn a curriculum this week you practiced patience, empathy, and calm under pressure. That's what will actually make the difference in someone's life. Welcome to the Digital Bridges mentor community."

Moving Forward

Facilitating the Digital Bridges Mentorship Programme is about more than delivering training sessions. It is about creating a learning environment where volunteers gain the confidence, skills, and motivation to support older adults with empathy, patience, and respect.

Every group of participants will be different. Their experiences, expectations, and learning styles will vary, and each training will bring its own opportunities and challenges. This guide provides a structured framework, but your experience, creativity, and ability to respond to the needs of the group will bring the programme to life.

Remember that successful facilitation is not measured by delivering every activity exactly as planned, but by creating meaningful learning experiences that encourage participation, reflection, collaboration, and personal growth.

By preparing volunteers to become confident digital mentors, you contribute to a wider mission of promoting digital inclusion, strengthening intergenerational solidarity, and empowering older adults to participate more actively in today's digital society.

Thank you for being part of the Digital Bridges project and for helping build stronger connections between generations one learning experience, one mentoring relationship, and one digital step at a time.