COACHING & MENTORING
simon bowen

Ten questions worth asking a coach before you start

Choosing a coach usually comes down to one free call of 45 minutes or less. In my experience, most people spend it describing their own situation and leave without asking how the coach actually works. These ten questions cover what decides whether the work goes well, and they work with any coach, me included.

HOW THEY'RE QUALIFIED

01 Who has accredited you, and to what standard?

Accreditation bodies such as the EMCC, the ICF and the Association for Coaching assess a coach's experience and their practice. A coach can tell you which body, which standard and when it was last renewed, and the body's own register lets you check it.

02 What work have you done with people in a situation like mine?

A coach can tell you which situations they've worked with most, without naming anyone, and you can judge how close they come to yours.

THE AGREEMENT

03 How are the fee, the contract and the end of the work agreed?

When you pay, whether there's a minimum number of sessions, and what happens if you stop early. Hearing it before the first session saves an awkward conversation later.

04 Which code of ethics do you work to, and can I read it?

A code of ethics sets out the standards a coach is held to, and it's what you'd point to if you ever needed to complain to the body they belong to. Most are published, so you can read the one your coach works to before you start.

WHAT THEY DO

05 Do you also mentor, and how will I know which you're doing?

Coaching works from your answers; mentoring brings in the mentor's own experience and opinions. Both are useful, and it helps to know which one you're getting at any moment.

06 What happens if something heavier than work comes up?

Business questions and personal ones often arrive together. A coach who isn't a therapist can say how they'd handle it, and when they'd suggest other support.

AROUND THE SESSIONS

Some coaches work without any platform or app, and that can work well. If they use one, these are worth asking.

07 How do you prepare, and what do I get after each session?

Whether the coach arrives knowing where you left off, and whether you get a written summary of what you decided.

08 Can you show me what has changed over time?

Something you can point to and compare, such as a reflection you answer again a few weeks later.

09 How do we book, move a session or stay in touch in between?

Whether you can see times and book yourself, and how quickly a message gets an answer.

10 If you use AI or record sessions, what for, and who sees what?

Which tools hold what you say, whether you're asked first, and whether you can say no and change your mind later.

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How I answer these

Simon Bowen, coach and mentor, near Berlin. Online worldwide and in Berlin, in English.

01 I hold the EMCC Global Individual Accreditation (EIA) as a Practitioner, and the Practitioner Diploma in Executive Coaching from the Academy of Executive Coaching.

02 I've coached and mentored since 2008. I also founded and scaled a software company, successfully sold it in 2022 and stayed with the buyer until February 2024.

03 One rate per session, agreed in the discovery call. You can end our work at any time and you pay only for sessions that have happened.

04 I work to the Global Code of Ethics for coaches, mentors and supervisors, which the EMCC maintains with the other bodies that sign it. You can read it at globalcodeofethics.org.

05 I coach and I mentor. I'll say when I'm switching between them and check it's what you want.

06 I'm not a therapist. If something comes up that may need therapeutic support, I'll raise it with you, and sometimes the coaching carries on alongside it.

07 I prepare from your earlier sessions, goals and reflections, and after each session you get a written summary of what we talked about and what you decided.

08 Reflections you answer again save a snapshot each time, so we can lay two dates side by side.

09 You book, move or cancel sessions yourself on my client platform, and you can message me between sessions. The platform comes with the coaching, and you don't have to use it.

10 AI drafts things for me, such as a session summary I then edit, and it never decides anything about you. It runs on your coaching data only if you agree, and you can withdraw that at any time. You never chat with an AI, a note-taker is used only with your permission, and no AI touches 360 feedback results.

A discovery call is free and takes up to 45 minutes, online from anywhere or in Berlin by arrangement, if you'd like to put these questions to me.

simonbowen.com/enquire

Scan to book a call