



# Big Brothers Big Sisters®

OF THE CENTRAL  
UPPER PENINSULA

## **In this Matchbook you will find:**

- Tips to kick-off your match
- Examples of how to budget your outings
- Taking your activities to the next level



# TOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MATCH

## 1. FOCUS ON SAFETY

- Big Brothers Big Sisters take every possible precaution to ensure the health and safety of each child who is matched in our program. Refer to our policies and guidelines. Contact your Match Engagement Coordinator immediately if any safety concerns arise.
- Kids notice everything so model appropriate behavior.

## 2. COMMUNICATE OPENLY, HONESTLY AND OFTEN

- Choose activities that everyone (parent/guardian, Big, Little) is comfortable with.
- Life happens, and that's ok! But if it is something that may affect the match relationship, let each other know.

## 3. KEEP APPOINTMENTS AND BE CONSISTENT

- Talk about what days and times of the week work best to plan match activities. Having a common meeting day can help cut down on rescheduling and communication issues.
- We all have busy lives and sometimes activities need to be rescheduled. Giving as much notice as possible and having a back-up option will keep the match running smoothly.

## 4. MAINTAIN MONTHLY CONTACT WITH BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

- Monthly check-ins with your Match Engagement Coordinator are required to ensure a strong, healthy and positive match. Keep in touch and return our calls, emails and texts.
- Do not wait to hear from us if you have any questions or concerns about something. Please reach out. That's what we're here for!





## 5. BUILD TRUST

- Listen to the “little stuff.” If your Little knows you are listening, they are more likely to share.
- Ask their opinion. We all like it when someone asks what we think, feel, prefer.
- Try not to interrupt. Give your Little some extra time to explain their opinions or desires, even if you think you know what they’re going to say.
  - Highlight the positives: recognizing strengths and successes goes much further than correcting or pointing out flaws and mistakes.

## 6. CREATE A BUDGET

- We encourage free to low-cost activities but understand that there will be times when there is a cost. Money is often a sticky subject, so the sooner a budget is discussed, the more relaxed everyone can be when choosing activities. Determine how much each person is able and/or willing to contribute and stick to it.
  - Make sure the Little knows the budget and help remind them that the focus is spending time versus spending money.

## 7. HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- New relationships take time and the impact of the match may not be easy to see, especially early on. Be present and enjoy each other’s company over anticipating changes in their behavior or person.
- Often, Littles won’t say “thank you,” but this doesn’t mean that they aren’t enjoying their time together. It just takes time for the relationship to form. Plus, they’re kids!

## 8. BE PATIENT

- Like all relationships, you will experience the occasional ups and downs. Particularly in the middle stages, as children become very comfortable in the relationship, there may be a periodic challenge. This is normal. There is no such thing as a perfect interpersonal relationship! Remember that challenges may be a valuable learning experience, and the way we respond to it can influence whether it becomes a growth opportunity for the Little.



# STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

**1 BEGINNING OF THE MATCH:** The beginning of any relationship is awkward. Your first several months will focus on getting to know each other, clarifying roles and beginning to establish a sense of trust.

## CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE:

- Getting to know each other and initial bonding
- Trying to see the positive in the relationship
- Mentee may try to get their Bigs' approval or impress them
- Mentee may not open up or talk very much

## SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- Be reliable. Show up to your activities and confirm with the parents/guardian ahead of time
- Involve your mentee in deciding how you will spend your time together
- Remain positive, non-judgmental and patient- it may take some time for your mentee to warm up
- Ask open-minded questions, use body language that is open, actively listen and demonstrate empathy

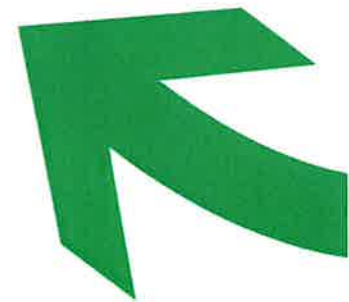
**4 TRANSITION AND REDEFINE:** Transitions happen for many reasons. The relationship may be renewed; transition to less regular contact or your match may close. This can be a difficult time for mentors, youth and their family. There may be many strong feelings about the match ending and it is important to not let the process of ending the match negate the many positives it provided.

## CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE:

- Relationship may become deeper or mentee may start pulling away
- Regular meeting pattern may change
- Reflection
- Preparing for closure

## SUGGESTED ACTIONS:

- Be prepared to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have
- Recognize and celebrate all you have accomplished together
- No matter what, be sure to give yourself and your mentee closure. This means ending on a good note, celebrating the time you had together and clarifying your relationship moving forward







**2 GROWTH:** Now your match is starting to build momentum and trust. A friendship is starting to develop. You're learning more about each other. It's normal for your mentee to start testing boundaries, making you feel less confident in the relationship. Rather than take this personally, recognize the testing behavior for what it is: your mentee may want to see how far your commitment really goes.

**CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE:**

- Bigs may start to feel underappreciated because they are not being thanked by their mentees
- Testing phase
- Rethinking first impressions
- Difficult feelings or emotions may surface
- Deeper level of friendship

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS:**

- Most mentees don't have the maturity to thank their mentors or realize the impact of the relationship until years later! That's OK! Model courteous behavior by sharing how much you appreciate your mentee
- Reinforce the boundaries you've established
- Show your mentee that they can trust you by being reliable and consistent
- Demonstrate respect
- Make sure to separate behaviors from who your mentee is
- Disclose personal feeling and experiences when appropriate

**3 MATURITY:** Trust has been established and conversation is more comfortable, personal and open. Bigs can use the trust they have built to move their mentees along the developmental pathway—focusing more on goals or trying new things.

**CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE:**

- Relationship level will become deeper
- Reflection
- Mentee may take more of the lead in what you talk about or do together

**SUGGESTED ACTIONS:**

- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared jokes
- Learn something new to both of you
- Provide feedback to listen and affirm fears that your mentee may have

## 6TH GRADE

### **Build Your Reading Skills:**

Read, read, read! Expand your vocabulary and knowledge by reading fiction and nonfiction books, newspapers, magazines, and blogs or online articles.

### **Challenge Yourself:**

Work hard in your classes and try your best to get all of your homework turned in (and on time!).

### **Match Activity Ideas:**

Go to plays, museums, outdoor festivals and libraries with your Big. You'll find out what interests you and learn more about the world.



## 7TH GRADE

### **Explore Your Hobbies:**

Whether it's music, art, technology or sports, these interests may lead you to potential career paths. Ask your Big to plan match outings around your hobbies and interests, and see what you can come up with together!

### **Extracurricular Activities:**

The most successful students not only study hard, they also join extracurricular activities. Joining clubs, sports teams or working a part time job will expand your horizons. You'll meet new friends with similar interests and feel more connected to your community.

### **Match Activity Ideas:**

Attend BBBS Teen events, especially our EXPLORE series, and learn about different careers that you might want to do when you graduate from high school.

## 8TH GRADE

### **Make Healthy Friendships:**

Surround yourself with friends that think of their futures and are working hard to make positive things happen. You will find having, and being, a supportive and encouraging friend can be a superpower!

### **Take Difficult Courses:**

Challenge yourself by taking a foreign language or other more challenging electives now. They'll help prepare you for high school and anything that comes after high school: colleges and employers want to see students that push themselves and work through challenges.

### **Match Activity Ideas:**

Attend the BBBS High School Success Workshop to learn tips to make a smooth transition to high school and learn about several post high school paths.

## 9TH GRADE

### **Define Your Study Routine:**

Find what learning style works for you and continue to use it throughout high school.

### **Make a College File:**

If you are thinking of going to college in the future start getting organized now. A college file should include: report cards, awards you received at school or in the community, a list of what activities you are in, a log of hours volunteered and a list of where you volunteer and other accomplishments.

### **Match Activity Ideas:**

Attend EXPLORE events and BBBS workshops like the Summer Opportunities Fair. These events will give you great information on how to prepare for your future AND they are fun!

### **Letters of Recommendation:**

As early as you can, ask teachers, employers, activity leaders and your Big, to write letters of recommendation for you. Letters of recommendation come in handy when you're applying to college, scholarships and jobs.

### **Make a Plan and Put it into Action:**

You have been working to get to this point from 6th grade and even before: take all of the knowledge, experiences and interests you have explored over the years and narrow down your paths: there are several available! Tap into that network of supportive adults and encouraging peers and with their help and your focus you will figure it out. BBBS can help you to brainstorm ideas, as well as cross tasks off your to do list regarding college, job training or armed forces applications.

## 12TH GRADE

## 10TH GRADE

### **Get to Know the Adults in Your Life Better:**

Your Big, teachers, counselors, coaches, bosses, youth leaders and parents or other family members can be great advocates for you. There are a ton of opportunities to get involved and it would be impossible for you to know all of them on your own.

### **Volunteer:**

It is great to give back to the communities you are a part of, whether that is your school, neighborhood, city, state, country or even global community! In addition to helping others, you will learn valuable skills and have more great additions for your resume.

## 11TH GRADE

### **Post Secondary Educational Options:**

Talk to your high school counselor to see if you can take PSEO classes. You might be able to go to a local college and take classes to earn free college credits, or you can take AP, CIS or IB classes at your high school.

### **ACT:**

Prepare for your college entrance exam and take free practice tests at BBBS or your school before the real test in the spring of junior year.

### **Scholarships:**

If you are planning on applying to college, start to identify scholarships you qualify for. It may seem early, but there are some available for juniors!



# ADDRESSING COMPLETION IN YOUR MATCH



## Completing your Match

At some point, most mentoring relationships end. Sometimes they end because the match just doesn't fit or life circumstances have changed. No matter the reason, you have given a lot to each other and going through this transition should be handled in a sensitive, thoughtful and caring way.

Honesty around the situation is incredibly important. Consider this an opportunity to model saying goodbye in the most healthy, respectful way. If addressed properly, match completion can be a positive experience rather than hurtful. Contact your Match Engagement Coordinator right away and we will help walk you through this process.

## Follow these Steps

**1. Develop a completion plan with your Match Engagement Coordinator. Be honest and let them know you won't be able to continue your match.**

**2. Talk to your Little, Parent or Guardian and Big to let them know that the match will end.**

**3. Focus on the positive aspects of the match. Some matches like to share photos and stories, and turn that into a farewell project.**

**4. Make sure the last match visit is special.**

**5. Be clear with your Little, Parent or Guardian about what they can expect from you next. If you tell them you are going to write or call, make sure you follow through with your promise.**

# CONVERSATION STARTERS



<b>What would you like to be when you grow up?</b>	<b>What is your favorite food?</b>	<b>What is your favorite color?</b>
<b>What is your favorite TV show?</b>	<b>What is your favorite book?</b>	<b>If you had three wishes, what would they be?</b>
<b>Can you remember a time where you laughed so hard you snorted?</b>	<b>What is the best way to eat an Oreo?</b>	<b>Do you normally do chores and homework right away or do you wait until the last minute?</b>
<b>If you won the lottery, what would you do with it?</b>	<b>Would you rather take a picture or be in the picture?</b>	<b>If you could be any animal, what would you be?</b>
<b>If you could do one thing, everyday, for the rest of your life, what would it be?</b>	<b>What's the best smell you've ever smelled?</b>	<b>Do you think you could go an entire day without talking?</b>
<b>What's your favorite joke?</b>	<b>When was the last time you helped someone without being asked?</b>	<b>If you became President of the United States, what would you do?</b>
<b>What is the one thing you don't know how to do, but you wish you did?</b>	<b>If you could trade places with anyone for a day, who would it be?</b>	<b>When was the last time you gave someone a high-five?</b>

# HOW TO BUDGET MONTHLY ACTIVITIES

## BUDGET DO'S

<b>Movies in the Park</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Sledding for Free</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Visit a Museum</b>	<b>\$10</b>
<b>BBBS Free Arts Day</b>	<b>\$0</b>

**TOTAL: \$10**

## BUDGET DON'TS

<b>Movies &amp; Popcorn</b>	<b>\$25</b>
<b>Learn how to Ski</b>	<b>\$80</b>
<b>Visit a Museum</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>Pottery Painting</b>	<b>\$40</b>

**TOTAL: \$195**

## THE FIVE DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BUDGETING

### DO:

1. Make a monthly activity budget.
2. Utilize Big Brothers Big Sister monthly activities and discount list.
3. Connect with community resources.
4. Discuss high cost activities with each other to determine who will pay.
5. Talk to your Match Engagement Coordinator if you need ideas or resources.

### DON'TS:

1. Wait until the last minute to plan activities.
2. Forget to ask for parent/guardian input when it comes to ideas.
3. Overlook the importance of spending time in your community.
4. Be quiet if you feel uncomfortable or unable to pay for an activity.
5. Leave your Little out.

# MATCH ACTIVITY BUCKET LIST



Sometimes it can be hard to come up with ideas for activities, so many new matches find it helpful to create a bucket list to try over the next year. In the first month of your new match, plan an outing at your local library, coffee shop, or park and take some time to complete this bucket list together.

**Things to do in the summer:**

---

---

---

**Things to do in the spring:**

---

---

---

**Things to do in the fall:**

---

---

---

**Things to do in the winter:**

---

---

---

**Things to do inside:**

---

---

---

**Things to do outside:**

---

---

---

**Volunteer opportunities:**

---

---

---

**Visit a new place:**

---

---

---

**Things to teach your Big:**

---

---

---

**Things to teach your Little:**

---

---

---

**Thing to try in your neighborhood:**

---

---

---

**Big Brothers Big Sisters events:**

- *Match Connection Party*
- *Summer Picnic*

**Tip:** Keep this list in the Big's car and check it off as you, referencing it when you're stuck on planning your next hang out. Don't forget to contact your Match Engagement Coordinator if you need helping coming up with ideas!



# TAKE YOUR ACTIVITIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

## DO

Do an activity based on your Little's interests or a new shared experience.

- Ask your Little and their parent/guardian for activity suggestions based on their interests
- If your Little is struggling to come up with ideas on their own, offer suggestions and ask them to pick the one that sounds most interesting

*Example: Your Little tells you they like board games and after discussing each other's favorite board games you discover you both love Connect Four. You plan an activity to go to a library and play Connect Four.*

## REFLECT

Reflect on activities together so you and your Little can learn more about each other. This will build your relationship and help plan future activities. Ask and answer questions such as:

- What did you like?
- What would you change?
- How could we make it more fun next time?

*Example: While playing Connect Four your Little liked keeping track of who won. They seemed to be having a lot of fun but got upset when they lost three games in a row. On the car ride home, your Little shares they had fun and wished the two of you could have played different games, too.*

## APPLY

Apply this information for future activities. Learn from what went well and what didn't to help your next activity be a success. Use this as a way to help your Little recognize their strengths, and improve and learn in areas they want to work on.

*Example: Plan a future activity to a local game shop or comic book store that has a variety of games to play together. Remember they like keeping score and let them be the banker or scorekeeper.*

## RELATE

Relate the "takeaway" aspects and teachable moments that happen organically in your Little's life. Learning opportunities can be artistic, attitude, educational, pleasure, social, physical, career, family or financial. Also, remember that you are learning too. Be sure to take these lessons to heart.

*Example: While playing future board game nights, talk to your Little about how they work through frustrations and what resiliency is. You learned that youth process feelings of failure and success differently.*




## THE DO, REFLECT, APPLY, RELATE MODEL

The “DO, REFLECT, APPLY, RELATE” model is more than just a way to process activities. It underscores some important elements of ANY relationship AND helps youth understand their role within their own experience. Here’s an example of how this model can be used.

<b>DO:</b> Discover what your Little enjoys and plan an activity around it	<b>REFLECT:</b> Ask questions to determine what they like, dislike and learn.	<b>APPLY:</b> Use the information you gathered to plan future activities	<b>RELATE:</b> Connect life skills and teachable moments during activities
<b>BAKING:</b> Recreate a traditional family recipe	Liked to measure/mix ingredients, disliked waiting during bake time, learned to use kitchen appliances	Plan an activity with less down time, look into doing a chemistry project	Talk about the importance of being able to cook for yourself, making healthy choices and share your family traditions
<b>ART:</b> Visit the <i>local</i> <b>MUSEUMS</b> on a free Saturday	Liked the samurai and mask exhibits, disliked trying to do the scavenger hunt, learned about a different culture and how to read a map	Plan activities with more exploration and less rigidity, make masks together with household materials or watch an age appropriate samurai movie	Talk about the significance of art in different cultures, how your Little sees art in their own life and share art that you’ve created
<b>SOCCER:</b> Go to a local park and play soccer	Liked setting up drills to do together and having a shootout, disliked the heat and got thirsty, taught Big about footwork	Go to a soccer game or plan more physical activities, make sure to bring plenty of water and take cool down breaks	Talk about other sports, good sportsmanship and share stories about winning and losing

# SAMPLE MATCH SCENARIOS

- 1. You and your Little Brother are shopping at the mall and he asks you to buy something for him.**  
*It is important that your match be based on friendship, not money or material possessions. Set financial boundaries and stick to them. There is nothing wrong with the occasional treat or gift on a special occasion, but buying things for your Little should not be a regular practice. In this scenario, you may want to help your Little think of ways to earn what he wants rather than relying on you to buy it for him.*
- 2. Your Little Sister wants to see an R-rated movie and she tells you that her mother lets her watch this type of movie all of the time.**  
*While there is no policy against taking your Little to an R-rated movie, it is important to remember that the adult content of R-rated movies is inappropriate for most of the children in our program. In this scenario, first consider if you are comfortable going to this movie. If not, say so. If you wouldn't mind seeing the movie, consider if you know enough about the content, if it is appropriate for the age and maturity level of your Little, and if it really is OK with the Little's parent before buying the movie tickets.*
- 3. Your Little Brother tells you that he has a secret. He will tell you only if you promise not to tell anyone else.**  
*A Big Brother or Big Sister cannot promise to keep all secrets. Some secrets may be harmless, such as information about a gift or a surprise for someone. However, if your Little tells you that he is being harmed in some way, or someone he knows is being harmed, you will have to tell the Little's parent and/or Match Support Specialist. In this scenario, it is best to tell your Little that he can tell you anything, but some things are serious enough that you may need to ask for help on how to handle it, so you cannot always promise that you won't tell anyone else.*
- 4. You do something really special for your Little Sister, but she does not thank you. In fact, she seldom says "thank you" and neither does her parent.**  
*It can be frustrating when your Little doesn't thank you, but there are many factors to consider. Has this been role modeled for your Little? Is your Little too embarrassed to thank you? Is your Little shy and uncomfortable verbalizing her feelings? It is fine to remind your Little when to say "thank you", but try to not to take it personally if it takes some time for your Little to make it a habit. If you watch closely, chances are that your Little is showing appreciation through behavior more than through words.*
- 5. You find that you are always the one planning outings. Your Little Brother is very complacent and never makes any suggestions.**  
*This is an example of how a friendship with a child can be different from a friendship with an adult. With your adult friends, it is likely that you take turns suggesting activities to do when you are together. That is not always the case with a child and there can be several reasons. Perhaps your Little doesn't know what his options are, maybe he hasn't been exposed to enough different things to know everything he likes or doesn't like, or maybe he isn't sure if you are really interested in the things he wants to do. A good strategy is to keep asking for his input, but don't get frustrated if he doesn't have anything to offer. Pay attention when you are at your Little's home and you can pick up some clues on his interests, even if he can't tell you.*
- 6. You arrive to pick up your Little Sister for an outing and discover that nobody is home.**  
*This is not a frequent scenario in our program, but it is important to know what you would do if it happens to you. If your Little's parent has a cell phone, make sure that you have that phone number. If you aren't able to reach your Little or the parent, leave a note on the door or a phone message saying that you were there. At your first opportunity, speak to the parent about the incident. Perhaps it was a simple misunderstanding. Remember that it is generally best to make sure the parent knows about your scheduled outings by making a quick confirmation phone call or email. With younger children, schedule the outings directly with the parent to avoid any misunderstandings. If this does become a regular occurrence, contact your Match Support Specialist and ask for assistance in approaching the parent.*
- 7. After several outings, you notice that your Little Brother has a problem with body odor and cleanliness.**  
*As difficult as it can be to discuss this topic, ignoring it is probably the worst thing you can do because if YOU notice it, chances are your Little's friends notice it, too. Depending on your Little's age, you could talk to either your Little or your Little's parent. If you talk to the Little's parent, an offer to help will probably be received better than a simple statement about the child's hygiene. If you are talking to the Little, approach the topic from an educational standpoint. Maybe your Little isn't aware of the changes in his body as he gets older and he hasn't developed a daily hygiene routine yet. For younger children, there are several good books on the importance of cleanliness.*

- 
8. **You frequently find yourself talking to your Little Sister's mother about her personal problems such as her divorce, her job, or financial situation. You feel that you need to help because if you don't, nobody else will.**

*It is natural for you to feel the urge to help your Little's parent. Sometimes you can do that just by spending a minute listening and sympathizing. However, it is important to keep boundaries with the Little's parent and not lose sight of who you are matched to. Taking on too many of the families problems can quickly lead to burn-out and then you might not be able to help your Little at all. If you are concerned about your Little's parent, encourage the parent to seek appropriate assistance from her support system or from professionals who are better equipped to advise her.*

9. **Your Little Brother's mother has said she will give him money to spend on outings, but you often find that you have to pay for everything.**

*It is always best to determine at the beginning of the match if the Little's parent will pay for your Little's events and activities. This can help avoid awkward moments later in the match. It is the expectation of the program that the Little pays his own way, but that is not always possible. If your Little cannot pay, then you may have to pay for both of you. If your Little's mother has agreed to give your Little money but hasn't been doing so, it is fine to ask if there has been a change in your agreement. Remember that it is not necessary to do costly activities on your match outings. Contact your Match Support Specialist if you need some ideas for low-cost or free activities.*



## **What if we don't hit it off right away?**

It's not easy to trust a stranger, especially if you're a young person who's had a lot of bad experiences with adults in the past. It may take a while to build up trust. Don't interpret caution as a rejection. A young person may not show it, and he or she may not even know it fully, but your help is definitely wanted. Think of the child's feelings first and your feelings second. Be patient, be kind, be consistent. It will pay off in the long run.

## **What if something serious comes up?**

While most mentoring relationships develop and flourish without serious problems, things do happen. Mentors have an important role, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. There are support systems in place for real emergencies. Contact your mentoring program coordinator for information. The most you are expected to do—or should do—is to help guide your mentee to the appropriate source of professional help.

## **What if we don't have anything in common?**

Many first-time mentors worry that differences in age, race, religion, education, or gender will be insurmountable barriers. Actually, most experienced mentors report that mentoring a young person from a different background broadened their own horizons and deepened their understanding of other people and cultures. So get curious. Ask lots of questions. Listen hard. Learn about the differences you have and the commonalities you share.

## **What if for some reason I can't mentor anymore?**

This is a very serious concern. Mentoring is a deep commitment. It will do far more harm than good to enter a young person's life, build up trust, and then abandon the relationship. Revisit the commitment you made when you decided to be a mentor—you should have made a commitment for *at least* one year. Please do your very best to honor your commitment. However, things do happen. Be honest and open about the reason and work together with your mentoring program coordinator to make the transition for your mentee as smooth as possible.

## **What if I do something wrong?**

If you are there for your young friend no matter what; if you listen and really hear what's being said; and if you do your best to counsel and not to judge, you will have done everything right. Some young people are more ready than others for a mentor. Some young people may test their mentor's commitment. Try not to take such behavior personally. Just keep trying your best and keep doing the right things. Gauge your success by your actions, not your mentee's.

