If you were to ask twelve different people the simple question, “What makes a good mentor?”, odds are, you would receive a dozen different answers. On the surface, the reason for this seems simple; the idea of a mentor figure has been around for millennia, and as such, it has taken on many different, nuanced meanings for a diverse range of people. That being said, there are many common threads in these varied definitions of a mentor, primarily regarding certain traits shared by mentor figures, including their trustworthiness and the ability to convey their experiences to another. As such, mentors are an essential part of the learning process, especially for activities with potentially serious consequences if performed irresponsibly. For this reason, mentors are especially important in the world of recreational firearm use because they can use their knowledge and skill to prevent others from making harmful or costly mistakes, making the experience both safer and more enjoyable. Good mentors want the best for those they counsel, and in using their knowledge to carefully introduce effective recreational firearm safety to beginners, mentors can ensure that this American pastime remains both a harmless and pleasant experience for all peoples, for generations to come.

In order to determine the qualities that constitute a good mentor, it is helpful to consider the word’s etymology, because concept of a mentor figure is certainly not a new idea. In fact, the model and origin for a mentor has been around for nearly three thousand years. In the *Odyssey*, the ancient epic poem from Greece, there is a character named Telemachus who has a tutor named ‘Mentor’, a trusted friend and advisor to his father, Odysseus. In this story, Mentor stayed behind in Ithaca to help raise and teach young Telemachus while Odysseus went off to war. Mentor acted as both a cultural guide and worldly educator to Telemachus; after all, in his father’s absence, Telemachus would one day have the responsibility to take over and work through his family’s obligations, and Odysseus did not want him to be unprepared when the day finally came. It is easy to see from the word’s origin, then, that a mentor is more than a simple instructor. A mentor must be someone with whom you have a high level of trust and a personal relationship with, because without this, learning anything is much more difficult. Mentors wish to impart knowledge or experience, yes, but they do so in a more meaningful way than a simple teacher; good mentors have a more personal stake in the success of the individual they are guiding, and they want
more than anything for their advice or knowledge to be heeded, because they care deeply about helping people succeed. Good mentors use that personal relationship and trust to impart what they know in a really significant, emotional way, and when their lessons are taken to heart, it is the people of the future, not the mentors themselves, which benefit the most, helping society become a better place.

Because a good mentor can more effectively impart information or experience than a simple instructor, it can be argued that the more potentially harmful an activity can be (especially if performed irresponsibly or incorrectly), the more important it is to have a good mentor introduce the topic. Recreational firearm use and firearm safety most definitely fit into this category. Firearm safety guidelines have come a long way in recent years, but the mishandling of firearms certainly still represents a harmful potential. This is why it is so important for a mentor figure to introduce these topics to newcomers; as discussed previously, mentors are people that can be trusted, someone that you have a personal relationship with. Mentors are people you believe in, and you truly believe that they have your best interests in mind, because they care about what happens to you. Because of these things, when a mentor instructs you to do or to not do something, and explains it to you based on their personal experiences, you are far more likely to take this knowledge to heart, and to really remember it in the future. When applying this to firearm safety, it is easy to see, then, that mentors can use their skill to make people’s lives much more safe when participating in recreational firearm activities. By engaging in the learning process with newcomers on a personal and emotional level, a good mentor can ensure that the lessons they wish to impart are taken seriously and readily recalled, and these are most certainly qualities desired of firearm safety. By helping others to understand the intricacies of firearm safety and usage, good mentors can use their skills to make the world a much safer place, and beyond that, they can help to ensure that these American pastimes remain a harmless, exciting part of society in the future. After all, if everyone engages in firearm activities in a safe, responsible manner, no one is harmed and everyone wins. Overall, good mentors have the ability to use their personal relationships to effectively impart firearm safety, ethics, and accountability on newcomers to the realm of recreational firearm use, and in doing so, they can ensure that people remain innocent of the ugliness that can arise from irresponsible firearm use.
Works Cited


