

## Mentor English: Everyone Needs Role Models

I'm going to be a dad soon, and I'm worried about doing a good job. There are a lot of ways that I can try to become the best father possible: I can get books about children (I did do this: I have several), I can join Internet forums about parenting (I did this, too) and I can look for someone who I think is a good father—maybe even my own father—and ask myself questions like: why do I think he's a good father? Can I do what he does? What things does he do that I really like? What things would I do differently?

When you find someone who you respect and want to **emulate**—that's a fancy word meaning you want to do the same things they do—you find a **role model**. I think my own father is a role model for me. . . in a lot of regards. Like anyone, though, I want to do some things differently from my father. My brother and my brother-in-law will be role models to me, as well. They're also great fathers to their kids.

Being a father is a big, serious business. I think a role model is important for fathers-to-be.

Of course, you can have a role model for more minor things: my friend Ryan is starting his own photography business, and I look to him as a role model for me, when I feel too shy to chase after my own dreams. Musicians often have role models: other musicians they respect. When they say “I want to be able to sing like Louis Armstrong,” they're saying he's a role model for them.

What role models do you have? Do you agree with me that it's important to have role models? For what parts of life are role models important? Does anyone look to you as a role model? Are you a good role model?

### Vocabulary

**Role:** Actors often have to 'play' at being someone they are not. Or, we say, they “play a *role*.”

(As in: he played the role of the good cop in last year's play.) But, in regular life, a *role* is one 'side' of your life. To my wife, I'm a husband. When I talk to her, I'm in my 'role' as a husband. To my child, I'll be a father. When I talk to him, I'll be in my role as a father. What role do you think I'm in when I talk to my students?

**Role Model:** I think you know what a super-model is: the women who look like a woman *should* look. (I don't think women should look like super-models, but I know I'm a minority.) A model, in general, is someone who shows us how something *should* be done. And a *role model* is someone who shows us how we should be in one of the many roles in our lives. Or, a role model can be a general thing: someone other people want to emulate. Children, especially, look up to actors, musicians and athletes as role models.

**Emulate:** My brother is a policeman. His son, who is four years old, wants to be a policeman when he grows up. But, it's natural for kids to want to do what their parents do. Or, it's natural for kids to want to *emulate* their parents. When you emulate someone, you do the things he or she does. (An emulator, for computers, is a program that makes your computer act like a different—usually, an *older*—computer so you can run the programs made for that computer.)