

Guidelines for Tutoring

Learning occurs most easily when the tutee feels comfortable. Sometimes a discussion about, for example, courses or extracurricular activities may help make the session more relaxed. Sometimes a warm smile and your obvious interest in the tutee will help. Remember that emotional needs may be more important than academic needs.

As each tutee is unique so is each tutoring session. No guidelines can apply in all situations nor at all times within a session. Use sensitivity and common sense to guide you. Constantly reassess a situation. Ask yourself, "What is working?" or "What is not working?"

The general rule to follow is that as tutors our job is to help improve the writer, not the writing. The tutee owns his/her piece of writing. As a tutor you must not do the writing for another. What can you do to ensure that the tutee retains responsibility for his/her work?

- ↳ First ask the tutee what he/she is working on and what problems have been encountered.
- ↳ The tutee keeps his/her paper in front of him/her and makes any changes him/herself.
- ↳ The tutee reads the text aloud and the tutor asks for clarification when necessary.
- ↳ Be on your guard for tutees who try to entice you into doing their work.

For learning to take place, the tutee must not be overwhelmed by all the skills that must be mastered and all the corrections that must be made. Try the following:

- ↳ Listen carefully to what the tutee feels are his/her major concerns, and if appropriate, work only on them.
- ↳ Do not rush in with minor corrections; deal first with major concerns of clarity, sense, and organisation. Only then, and when you have a sense of the student's pattern of errors, decide, preferably with the student, which errors to focus on.
- ↳ Take time out from the tutee's work to teach a mini-lesson on a point of grammar, on thesis statements, on organisation.
- ↳ Do not overwhelm (or even use, if unnecessary) with grammatical terms. Use simple examples to give your points. Teach the semi-colon, for example, by giving one clear sentence, "I like him; he's intelligent."

- ↳ Have the tutee summarize what he/she has learned from the session and what he/she will continue to work on.

The approach of The Learning Centre is whole language:

- ↳ Language should not be broken into fragments.
- ↳ Language should be used in meaningful contexts.
- ↳ Different language forms, for example, reading and writing, are interconnected. Practice in one leads to improvement in the other.

Tutors should be aware of the writing process in helping a tutee. While each person has a unique writing method, many of us use the following to arrive at a piece of writing: brainstorming, discussion, formulation of a purpose, formulation of a thesis, planning, first draft, final draft. Be aware of which stage your tutee is in and encourage him/her to allow enough time to complete the assignment.

Be aware of teaching techniques to ensure learning:

- ↳ use positive reinforcement
- ↳ use self-disclosure if appropriate
- ↳ use humour if appropriate
- ↳ use repetition
- ↳ include a variety of techniques, some visual, some oral

We want the tutees to become self-sufficient. To this end teach proof-reading where the tutee matches what he/she reads aloud with what was said. In this way the tutee is taught to find his/her own mistakes. If one week commas are taught, the next week review the principles involved, then just underline the mistakes.

Complete The Learning Centre's teaching form for your tutee (or the log book) so that you will recall in later tutoring sessions what has been taught. Review these points; your tutee should assume responsibility for them.

The Learning Centre
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