

TUTORING & WRITING CENTER

TUTOR HANDBOOK



Johnston Community College
Tutoring and Writing Center
(919) 209-2208

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	
	Welcome Letter	3
	TWC Contact Information	4
	TWC Mission and Purpose	5
II.	Expectations	
	Rules and Regulations	6
	TWC Tutor Job Description	7
	Information for Students Requesting a Subject Tutor	8
	Information for Students Requesting a Writing Tutor	9
	Tutor Code of Ethics	10
III.	Tutoring Resources	
	A Tutoring Session-General Outline	11
	Establishing Rapport: The Tutor/Tutee Relationship	12
	Tutoring the Under-Prepared Student	14
	Tutoring Non-Traditional Age Students	15
	Helping Students Recover from Failure	16
	Tutoring Techniques	17
	Helping Students to Improve their Critical Thinking	21
	Tips for Writing Tutors	22
	Tutoring Scenarios and Potential Problems	23
	Referral Skills	25

Dear TWC Tutor:

Welcome to the Johnston Community College Tutoring and Writing Center (TWC). We are excited to work with you.

The TWC is an office devoted to the mission of helping students succeed in and beyond their collegiate experience. As a tutor for the TWC, you will be an integral part of the academic support community. You will come to know departmental expectations, assist students in a specific discipline and skill area, and sharpen your own skills and knowledge in the process.

TWC tutors are not expected to be flawless or perfect in their disciplines. Instead, they are expected to be patient, reliable, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable students or professionals who inspire and prepare students for independent academic success.

The following handbook was designed to introduce you to the Tutoring and Writing Center and your role as a tutor, to provide information that may be useful, and to provide a place to record your personal and professional awareness of your tutoring experience.

Thank you for joining the TWC. We welcome any suggestions and encourage your comments. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Christa C. Strube

Christa C. Strube
Lead Coordinator, Tutoring and Writing Center

TWC Contact Information

The Tutoring and Writing Center office is housed in Mobile Unit 1 behind Student Services.

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Tutoring and Writing Center under Quick Links

Tutoring and Writing Center Mission and Purpose

Mission

The Tutoring and Writing Center seeks to provide a positive, enriching, and inspiring environment of academic support and encouragement to the students and faculty of Johnston Community College.

The TWC strives to promote and inspire the academic and personal advancement of students beyond the classroom experience in an effort to produce independent, life-long learners.

The TWC works to promote values of integrity, leadership, and unity in the students it employs and serves.

Purpose

The Tutoring and Writing Center utilizes and creates resources and techniques to enhance and support the academic community at JCC.

To promote the academic success of students, the TWC provides individual and small-group tutoring assistance to attend to student strengths and weaknesses. Tutors listen to individual needs; identify problems, progress, and success; and document sessions for the benefit of the student and instructor.

The TWC provides a positive environment for teaching and pedagogical development and growth to tutors and mentors by encouraging them to relate and respond optimistically to various learning styles and personalities at the same time enhancing their own thinking and skill levels in their academic disciplines.

The TWC provides additional opportunities for educational enhancement through interactive seminars and workshops that illuminate various aspects of liberal arts education.

For faculty, the TWC strives to provide an academic venue that supports the educational growth of students, complements classroom experiences, and reinforces the student's role and responsibility in his or her learning. The TWC also provides programs and workshops to support the development and variety of pedagogical methods and strategies for JCC faculty.

The TWC strives to involve all students and faculty at Johnston Community College in the promotion of successful supportive services in an effort to help strengthen the academic success and integrity of the college.

Rules and Regulations for Tutors

1. All Tutors must provide a completed application, unofficial transcripts, and any other paperwork pertaining to their Qualifications needed to work for the TWC.
2. No Tutoring should be done outside of the Tutoring and Writing Center unless a tutoring sessions needs to take place outside of the TWC Hours of Operation, and then the Academic Skills Center can be used. Other concerns must be approved through the TWC Coordinator.
3. Tutoring sessions and/or workshops are limited to 1 hour.
4. Tutors will be paid for up to a max of 10 hours per week for a possible total of 40 hours in a pay period.
5. A Tutor Referral Form must have been filled out by the student and turned in to the TWC Coordinator before a Tutor can work with a student.
6. Tutors must punch in and out on the time clock with their time card for each tutor session and/or workshop that they work and fill out the Timesheet per each tutor session and/or workshop per student they work with.
7. Tutors are expected to be on time for tutoring sessions and work in a professional manner.
8. Tutors must notify the TWC Coordinator in advance if they are going to be late or absent for their appointed time in the TWC or for an appointment with a student.
9. All Tutors must attend any training sessions.
10. Tutors are to fill out the Tutor Documentation Spreadsheet at the end of each pay period in the TWC and email it to the TWC Coordinator.
11. Tutor Timesheets, Timecards, and Spreadsheets are to be submitted to the TWC Coordinator monthly by noon on the 13th of each month. If the 13th falls on the weekend, all paperwork/spreadsheets must be completed and turned in on the Friday prior to the 13th by noon.

TWC Tutor Job Description

Qualifications: Tutors from any discipline are welcome; however, tutors are especially needed for Math, English/Writing, and Science. TWC tutors work with confidential information. It is very important that the tutors be trustworthy, and they must be responsible and professional when working with this information and students. Tutors should also have a positive attitude and knowledge of and enthusiasm for their discipline. All peer tutors must have completed or the course they are tutoring, have received a minimum of 3.0 in the course they are tutoring (unofficial transcripts are required), and provide one faculty recommendation with the completed application. A completed application, resume, and unofficial transcripts are required of professional tutors. Writing tutors must also provide a writing sample.

Primary Function: To provide positive, enriching, and inspiring academic support and encouragement to students beyond the classroom experience through individual and/or group tutoring.

Duties: Though each discipline has specific tutoring needs, some basic principles apply to all:

1. Meet with students individually or in group sessions either through scheduled walk-in hours or by appointment.
2. Assess a student's strengths and weaknesses under guidance from the TWC Coordinator;
3. Recognize success and identify ways to improve;
4. Require students to actively participate in sessions;
5. Explain, model, and offer academic assistance related to the subject or assignment;
6. Offer suggestions for more effectively studying for or preparing assignments for the course;
7. Use resources available through the TWC, Academic Skills Center, and Online Tutoring
8. Complete Tutoring Documentation Forms for each session;
9. Follow up with tutees in a timely manner;
10. Communicate with the TWC Coordinator regarding issues, concerns, and suggestions;
11. Other duties as necessary for effective tutoring.

Standards:

1. Attend training sessions;
2. Maintain a professional work ethic and dress;
3. Meet with supervisor to set schedule and as necessary;
4. Show up for appointments and scheduled hours on time and as scheduled. If unable to work, the tutor should notify the student and supervisor ahead of time or as soon as possible after the related absence.
5. Never discuss an instructor, staff member, or student in a negative way;
6. Tutors should never do the work for the student. This includes homework, proofreading/editing, papers, and assignments of any kind. However, a tutor may model the correct way to do the work, provide samples, and offer suggestions.

Information for Students Requesting a Subject Tutor

This information is given to students when they request a tutor. However, it may also be useful to you in your sessions and understanding your expectations.

How to Make a Tutoring Appointment:

- Visit www.johnstoncc.edu then click on Tutoring and Writing Center under quick links
- Fill out referral form & turn it into the TWC Coordinator or to tutor at assigned appointment
- Contact the tutor directly via email or sign up for a workshop via email of the tutor hosting the workshop
- Do not wait until the last minute to make an appointment.
- To cancel or if you will be late, contact your tutor.

What a Student Should Bring to a Tutoring Session:

1. The textbook from the class
2. Syllabus
3. Notes, past tests or quizzes, assignment, etc.
4. The work completed on the assignment so far
5. Calculator, other supplies
6. A list of questions and things to work on

What to Expect from a Tutoring Session:

- **Sessions and/or Workshops are one hour.** Therefore, it is important for you to have an idea of what you want to work on. The session depends on what your needs are, so be sure to talk to the tutor before you begin.
- Supplemental instruction through demonstrating, explaining, clarification, modeling, etc. Tutoring sessions do not replace class instruction, reading the text, or independent work, but do offer reinforcement, practice, clarification, and suggestions for improvement.
- Related resources

What NOT to Expect from a Tutoring Session:

- The tutor will NOT do the work for you. Tutors will complement your work, reinforce your learning, provide you hints and suggestions for learning the material, and review with you, but they will not replace good, honest, hard work.
- The tutor will NOT “cram” with you. Do not expect to have a 5 hour session the day before the test.
- Students will NOT “drop off” homework or assignments for a tutor to review. You must schedule a time to sit with the tutor and discuss the work and your questions together.
- Tutoring will NOT necessarily result in perfect, error-free work and does not guarantee high grades.

Information for Students Requesting a Writing Tutor

- Please note that to make an appointment with a writing consultant for help with a paper must be made 48 hours in advance for an essay and one week prior for larger/research papers.

What a Writing Tutoring Session Might Include:

As students begin an assignment, tutors can help them to understand the assignment. *However, tutors cannot assume to know the criteria of an assignment without written instructions from the instructor. Therefore, it is imperative that you have a copy of these with you. Also, try talking to your instructor if you don't understand the assignment.*

- As students revise their drafts and work through the paper, tutors can offer suggestions about any of the following:
 - Invention (getting started)
 - Focus (main idea, purpose, narrowing topic)
 - Organization (arrangement of ideas, paragraphing)
 - Development (supporting details, examples, explanation)
 - Style (sentence structure, word choice)
 - The title, thesis statement, introduction, conclusion
- Tutors can assist in setting and meeting priorities for revision
- As students polish their drafts, tutors can help them develop their own editing/proofreading skills concerning grammar, spelling, punctuation, and documentation.
- **TWC Writing Tutors CAN** help you to improve as a writer, pay careful attention to written work, actively listen and give thoughtful responses to ideas, and provide knowledgeable assistance in finding resources needed to complete writing.

What a Tutoring Session WILL NOT Include:

- **Students will NOT “drop off” papers for a tutor to review.** You must schedule a time to sit with the tutor and discuss the paper together.
- Tutors will NOT write a student's essay. The tutor's job is to answer questions and make suggestions, but the words and ideas should be the student's.
- Tutors will NOT edit/proofread an entire essay. Instead, they will answer specific questions.
- Tutoring will NOT necessarily result in a perfect, error-free paper and does not guarantee high grades on your writing. Tutors vary in style and approach, and are not the professors who will grade your papers. Our opinions are just that – opinions; you are free to take or leave these opinions at your own discretion.

Source: Three Rivers Community College

Tutor Code of Ethics

1. Subject proficiency and knowledgeability have top priority in my task as tutor.
2. My major motivation is building the student's self-confidence.
3. My student deserves and will receive my total attention.
4. The language my student and I share must be mutually understandable at all times.
5. I must be able to admit my own weaknesses and will seek assistance whenever I need it.
6. Respect for my student's personal dignity means I must accept that individual without judgment.
7. My student will constantly be encouraged but never insulted by false hope or empty flattery.
8. I will strive for a mutual relationship of openness and honesty as I tutor.
9. I will not impose my personal value system or life style on my student.
10. I will not use a tutoring situation to proselytize my personal belief systems.
11. Both the student and I will always understand my role is never to do the student's work.
12. I count on my student to also be my tutor and teach me ways to do a better job.
13. I will do my best to be punctual and keep appointments, not only out of courtesy but as an example for my student to follow.
14. I will maintain records, lesson plans and progress data as expected and required.
15. I will do my best to stay abreast of the current literature about tutoring as it relates to my work.
16. Good tutoring enables my student to transfer learning from one situation to another.
17. Making learning real for the student is what tutoring means, and is an important part of my goal.
18. My ultimate tutoring goal is my student's independence.

Adapted from: National Association of Tutorial Services

A Tutoring Session – General Outline

The following outline describes what happens at a typical tutoring session:

1. Beginning a Session

- Arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself.
- Be open, friendly, and genuinely interested in the tutee. Ask the tutee's name, about his/her background, and the reason the tutee is at the TLC. Really listen to the tutee's answers.
- **Complete the Tutoring Documentation Form for each session.** If this is the first meeting, **make sure the student has provided a completed Tutor Referral Form.** Forms can be found online at the TWC website.
- Decide upon a plan of action for the session with the student. Always ask what the tutee would like to work on in the allotted time.

2. During the Session (More tips for a successful session in manual)

- Always involve the tutee by expecting and requiring him/her to do actively participate. Have tutees do as much of the assigned task as possible. Do not do the work for them. Instead, guide them to discover the answers or solutions on their own. Ask probing questions instead of questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no."
- Motivate and encourage the student to discuss and analyze the material.
- Remember to acknowledge success as well as problem areas.

3. After the Session

- Do a brief "wrap-up" of materials or information covered in the session. If time allows, clear up any questions regarding course content just covered in the session.
- Schedule another appointment if necessary. If another is scheduled, discuss what you will do at the next one, assigning any exercises to do in the meantime.
- Complete documentation form and have student sign.
- Discuss any concerns with the TWC Coordinator if necessary.

Establishing Rapport: The Tutor/Tutee Relationship

1. At the beginning of your first session with a student, introduce yourself and offer some information about yourself – your major, your hometown, your hobbies, etc. Ask the student to do the same. Be yourself and SMILE!
2. Exchange phone numbers, emails, and other contact information to access each other easily, especially if meeting by appointment.
3. During the first session, you want to start a dialogue with the student about what kind of help *they* think they need. What do they hope to get out of a tutor? What are their goals and what do they want to improve upon? What problems are they having in the course, what questions do they have about the material, why do *they* think they are not getting good test / paper grades? Together, try to determine the most important and necessary objectives. REMEMBER TO LISTEN ACTIVELY AND CAREFULLY.
4. Remember that your tutee may be intimidated or lack confidence during your session. Do all you can to reassure your tutees and show them that you are not there to judge; you are there to help them become independent learners.
5. During the first session with a new student, it is important to make them feel comfortable with you and with the idea of asking for help. Be encouraging, positive, and enthusiastic.
6. **Keep information divulged during tutoring session confidential.** Feel free to discuss any areas of success or concern with the TWC Coordinator, but refrain from discussing this information with other tutors or students.

Nonverbal and Verbal Communication:

Effective communication is essential to the building of trust, the imparting of information, and to the successful resolution of any problem-solving effort. It is through both verbal and non-verbal messages that tutors and tutees discover accurate meaning from each other.

- Non-verbal communication includes body posture, gestures, and facial expressions, which are commonly used to communicate messages and meaning.
- Cultural aspects can influence non-verbal communication. Although it is helpful to understand various cultural practices, it is important not to stereotype and typecast tutees based on their culture.
- Body posture often reveals much about a person's physical, mental, or emotional state and communicates added meaning to verbal messages. For instance, if a tutor is sitting erect and not slouching, it conveys to the tutee that the tutor is confident and ready to assist. If a tutee is sitting with shoulders hunched, the tutor may assume that the tutee is tired, bored or disinterested.

- Gestures such as tapping feet, shrugging shoulders, clenching fists, and using hand movements may communicate added meaning. Also, excessive hand gesturing may interfere with verbal messages by being distracting.
- Smiling, frowning, and the lack of or uses of eye contact are examples of facial expressions that convey meaning during communication.
- Verbal communication involves listening, attending to, and responding to the tutees in such a way so that they know they have been heard and understood.
- A tutor should not interrupt a tutee.
- Effective tutoring can take place when tutors communicate encouragement, support, respect, and non-judgmental acceptance. The following verbal communication behaviors facilitate learning: paraphrasing, clarifying, reflection, interpretation, and indirect and direct questioning.

Tutoring the Under-prepared Student

Given the fact that many of today's college students are determined to be under-prepared by many standards, it is often the lot of the learning center tutors to work with these students and remedy problem areas. Tutoring centers are seeing more and more students who are ill-prepared, lacking definitive study skills, and many times lacking direction and maturity.

Characteristics of the Under-prepared Student:

- Maintained about a C average in high school, may be in developmental courses.
- They are often weary of tutoring services, do not usually understand the role of the tutor, and remember only their parents' threat of making them go to a tutor if they failed a course.
- Many are so overwhelmed or frustrated that they don't know where to start.

Suggestions for Tutors

There are a number of approaches that a tutor can utilize to best serve the needs of the under-prepared student:

1. The tutor should be sensitive to the generally heightened anxiety of the student.
2. The tutor should consider the fact that study skills are of the utmost importance to the under-prepared student. The tutor should pay attention to note-taking skills, reading skills, and the amount of work being done by the student. Spending time in this area will reap great rewards for the student – the material seems easier, the professors seem less daunting, and anxiety levels are reduced.
3. The tutor should be aware that time management skills are often an issue for under-prepared students. If the tutor can help with organizing work schedules, outlining a plan of attack, and setting priorities for tasks, this could be even more helpful than an hour spent on quadratic equations.
4. The tutor should be aware of the fact that most under-prepared students have a great deal of difficulty focusing on the task. The tutor should attempt to utilize all of his or her best skills in this area.
5. It is normally a good idea to address very little course-specific work during the first session. It is much more important to gain the student's confidence and attempt to define the role of the tutor in terms which the student can understand, be very specific regarding what a tutoring session can and cannot do, and generally make the student comfortable in his/her surroundings.
6. The tutor should continually check the written work, notes, and homework of the student for clarity, accuracy, and completeness.
7. The tutor should attempt to highlight understanding of concepts throughout all of their sessions since it is the case that many under-prepared students tend to try to memorize rather than to learn.

Source: Helen Baril. "Addressing Diverse Audiences: Tutoring the Under-Prepared Student." CRLA Tutor Training Handbook.

Tutoring Non-Traditional Age Students

Characteristics of Non-Traditional Students

- 25 years or older
- May be returning to school or coming for the first time
- May have different reasons/motives for being in school - home life transition (children leaving, divorce), mid-life transition (change in career/employment), or workplace transition (more technology)
- May have rusty basic skills, which need to be reinforced before new technical or academic skills can be acquired
- May need their self-esteem and self-confidence reinforced since the current educational environment may be quite different from their previous education experience.
- Success in learning experience in later years generally depends on motivation and access to instruction rather than public school performance in elementary or high school

Theories of Adult Learning

Adults bring to any new learning situation a body of knowledge, ideas, concepts, and understanding which they have developed from prior learning and experience. Adults use this knowledge as a sense-making mechanism to interpret, comprehend, judge, connect, and store new information.

Malcolm Knowles (1984) addresses the learning needs of adult students:

- To be motivated to learn,
- To participate in setting their own goals,
- To learn in an environment which respects, is related to, and fully utilizes their accumulated wisdom attained through a lifetime of experience,
- To participate actively in the learning process,
- To share responsibility for planning, operating, and monitoring the progress of the learning experience,
- To experience a sense of progress towards mastering their goals,
- To benefit from peer support and reinforcement, as well as individual attention,
- To participate in problem solving exercises that simulates real-life situations.

Strategies Needed by Adult Students

Adult non-traditional students may benefit from:

- Time Management Skills: Non-traditional students often have many competing demands in their lives that reduce the time available for education. Their ability to manage time well will spell success in dealing with the many commitments they possess.
- Note-taking Skills: The capacity to identify and isolate the main ideas presented in the classroom lecture with accompanying supporting material will result in more efficient review sessions. Students may tend to, *but should not*, write everything down in their notes.
- Test-taking Skills: Knowledge of how to evaluate test items, how to plan answers, and how to allot time to test sections are vital to success in taking exams.
- Positive attitude application: Confidence in ability to learn and intending to learn are active processes that must be practiced to be developed well.
- Awareness of learning style: An understanding of how a person processes new information from short-term to long-term memory is important. Learning how to learn, discovering how learning styles

affect teaching and learning, and understanding reading as a search for meaning may help the adult student be successful.

Source: Judith S. Craig “Non-Traditional Age Students.” CRLA Tutor Training Handbook.

Helping Students to Recover from Failure

Learners who have failed often feel that it’s entirely their own fault and that they should not expect any help from their tutors. However, there is much that tutors can do to help learners recover from failure. The following suggestions may help you to help those learners who, for one reason or another, have not succeeded academically.

1. When learners have failed at something, **help them to accept it**. Running away from it may be an instinctive reaction, but it does not help them to prevent a similar thing happening in the future. Once learners have accepted that a particular episode was unsuccessful, they can begin structured preparations to guarantee that it will be successful next time.
2. Help learners suffering from depression after failure **to look at the failure as a learning opportunity**. Point out how unimportant and fruitless it is for them to dwell on “letting people down” feelings. Remind them that every successful person has recovered from failure at one time or another. Advise them to work out constructively exactly what they were not able to do.
3. Explain that “failure” is a **transient stage**, when what the learners managed to do simply did not match what they were required to do at that stage. Having failed does not mean that they “can’t ever do it,” it simply meant they “couldn’t yet do it” on a particular occasion.
4. Remind learners how useful it is for them to know exactly **what they can’t do yet**. Only when they have this knowledge can they systematically fine-tune their learning to eliminate the possibility of the same thing going wrong in the future.
5. Give examples of how “getting something wrong” is one of the most **effective ways** of eventually getting it right. Knowing what can cause problems is useful knowledge for the future. In life in general, probably more is learned by getting it wrong first, than by getting it right the next time.
6. Encourage small groups of learners who have failed something to **work together** to find ways of analyzing what caused the failure. Sharing problems with other learners in the same situation can be comforting.
7. Make sure that learners who have failed something **don’t feel themselves to be failures**. An exam failure may seem daunting at the time, but it is only a very small and quite artificial measure of what a person can or can’t do. Remind them that it is not themselves who are failures – it is simply a matter of something that at a particular time and in particular circumstances, they did not manage to achieve.

Source: Race, Phil, and Sally Brown. 500 Tips for Tutors.

Tutoring Techniques

Explaining and Lecturing

Sometimes it is necessary to clarify and explain a topic if the tutor finds that a tutee has not been introduced to a key point (or piece of information) that is necessary to understand the concept. When doing this, make sure that you keep your explanations clear, minimal, and to the point. Lecture only when necessary.

"What?", you say. "Why is this? My instructor lectures all the time." Well, that's it exactly. You are not an instructor. It is important to keep in mind that you are there to provide opportunity - the opportunity for the tutee to find and use the available resources he/she has at his/her disposal. Sometimes this will mean you but, more often than not, this will mean the tutee's textbook, his/her lecture notes, his/her past tests, previous examples and so on. Make sure to provide the opportunity to use resources other than yourself.

Questions and Listening

It is just as important (if not more important) for the tutor to guide the tutee in doing most of the explaining. This will reinforce learning for the tutee and help the tutor identify problem areas.

Two of the key ingredients in guiding this successful interchange are: posing questions and active listening. Examples of questioning techniques follow:

- Ask open-ended questions.
 - By posing questions that require more than a yes/no response, you encourage the tutee to start thinking.
 - "Where do you think we should start?"
 - "What are the steps involved in working this problem?"
 - "What is the definition?"
- Ask probing questions.
- Probing questions follow up on a student's contribution.
 - "What will happen if what you said is true?"
 - "What made you think that?"
 - "What is the opposite of this position?"
 - "You're correct. The answer to this question is false. What would be needed to make it true?"
- Rephrase questions.

- Try repeating your question in a slightly different manner.
- Reword your original question.
- Break your original question into smaller parts.
- Change the inflection in your voice when repeating the original question.

The next key is to ACTUALLY LISTEN to your tutee's responses. This sounds easy, but it is harder than you may think. Listening is an acquired skill. In normal conversation, we don't really listen to others. We hear what they say but don't listen carefully enough to "read between the lines". In order to be an effective tutor, you have to slow down and concentrate on what your tutee is saying. Is he/she grasping the concept? Can he/she explain it easily or does it take some effort? Is his/her body language saying anything? In order to get the answers to these and other questions, you must listen carefully and observe purposefully.

Tutee Summaries

Along with listening, it is very important to spur your tutee into giving a summary of what has been covered. If steps are involved in finding the solution, make sure that all steps are included (in the right order) by your tutee when summarizing. Try to encourage more than a parroting of the steps. Sometimes, having the tutee say the steps in his/her own words will decrease the tendency to parrot responses. If concepts are involved, have the tutee paraphrase the ideas in his/her own words.

This simple summary will help you determine if you can move on to another topic or need to stay with the present one. If the summary is difficult for the tutee, stay where you are until he/she can repeat it with ease. Use the questioning technique to guide the tutee to the correct answer if he/she has gotten some of the steps out of order.

Silence

A common misconception of new tutors is that your tutee should ALWAYS feel comfortable. Sometimes, "comfortable" is not the best solution. For example--you have posed a question to your tutee. 8-10 seconds pass with no response. You start to feel awkward. Should you say something? Perhaps another question will spur a response.

Another question or even a clarification might help, but sometimes, just being patient while waiting for a response will yield results. Because the tutor understands the information, he/she is much quicker in coming up with a response. Because of this, it is often difficult for a tutor to anticipate the amount of time a tutee needs to process the information. Take this into consideration when that uncomfortable silence sets in. Since this technique is often uncomfortable for both the tutor and tutee, it can be a difficult tool to implement. However, if used sparingly and appropriately, your tutee learns to think critically and becomes more independent.

Gauge Your Tutee's Comprehension

Along with this, it is very important to continuously gauge your tutee's level of comprehension. Don't assume knowledge. Let's say a tutor and tutee start a session. The tutee explains that he/she wants help with one question. The question asks the tutee to diagram a hyperbola. The tutor asks, "Where would you start?" Although this is a good question to evaluate whether or not the tutee knows the steps to apply in order to diagram the problem, a more appropriate question would have been, "Can you tell me what a hyperbola is?" Remember, don't assume knowledge. Start with the basics FIRST. Here are some ways to gauge your tutee's comprehension:

- Start with vocabulary.
- Make sure the tutee understands all associated terminology.
- Have the tutee summarize what you have said.
- Quiz the tutee on information you have covered together.
- Have the tutee explain the topic to you as if he/she were the tutor.
- Ask the tutee if he/she understands.
- Ask probing questions.
- Have the tutee draw a diagram of the topic(s) covered (if appropriate).

Drawings and Diagrams

For a visual learner, tactile learners, or for certain types of content fields like science, you may find that a drawing or diagram is the best way to convey information. It is much easier to understand a drawing of carbon dioxide than an explanation of carbon dioxide. Visual learners will need to see, usually on paper, what you are describing. For tactile learners, (those who learn by doing), have the tutee build the model or diagram himself/herself. The act of building the model will reinforce learning.

Use Reinforcement

Your tutees will need you to notice their successes as well as their mistakes. That's where reinforcements come in. When using positive reinforcements, make sure to use reinforcement without over-exaggerating the student's gain. The more specific you are about the gain, the better. Following are some examples of reinforcement:

- Verbal
 - "Good job on _____!"
 - "You are really doing much better with _____!"

- "I like the way you did ___!"
- "This looks better than the last time."
- "You have really been working hard at this. I am proud of your effort."
- "All right!"
- Nonverbal
 - Use facial expressions--smile, look surprised.
 - Nod your head.
 - High-five or give the thumbs up sign.

Reinforcements help the tutee have a sense of accomplishment, provide a reward, and give tutees an incentive to do more. After all, you noticed!

The Strange and Unusual

If you can make the tutee see something in a new way, she is more likely to remember it. A writing tutor once explained nouns and verbs the following way: "This is a noun," she said, crumpling up a piece of paper. "Now it's a verb," she said, throwing the crumpled paper across the room.

Let Your Tutee Do the Work

It is false to assume that a good tutor always has many returning tutees waiting in line when the tutor comes on duty. If a tutee can only do his work with your help, what happens when you are no longer there to explain, in the classroom or taking exams? Aid the tutee in finding other resources and developing appropriate study strategies. With these tools, they can succeed academically without you. A tutor should be working his/her way out of a job. By allowing the tutee to have control of the process, you encourage independent learning and help the tutee gain confidence in their own ability and an awareness of their learning styles. So how do you do this? Let the tutee have the pencil. Let the tutee look up the information in the book. Let the tutee draw the diagram. Give control back to the tutee. Let the tutee have control of the mouse/keyboard.

Part of the learning process is frustrating. Part of the learning process is getting things incorrect. Part of the learning process is slow. **If you are "showing" your tutee how to do everything, any successes you experience are yours only - not your tutees.** Guide the direction of your tutees thinking. Don't do the thinking for them. The more independent they become the better tutor you are.

Source: Three Rivers Community College Tutoring and Academic Success Centers

Helping Students to Improve their Critical Thinking

There are two reasons why aiding tutees in developing their reasoning abilities is a good idea. First, teaching critical thinking does not involve teaching more content; rather, it is a method of getting tutees to think for themselves and to ask good questions as they study. Also, getting students to think well on their own should be the tutor's ultimate goal, and the best way to do this is to teach students not just content area skills but effective problem solving strategies as well. This will make the tutor's job easier, not harder, and empower tutees to become more active in their own education.

Tips for helping tutees improve critical thinking:

- Do not automatically answer questions the tutee has. Instead, whenever possible, turn the question back to the student. Ask questions such as these: "What do you think?", "What ideas do you have about that?", and "What has been your experience?"
- When presenting new information, rather than simply telling the tutee, try asking questions. Develop a repertoire of generative questions, such as the following: "What do you already know about this?", "What do you mean by that?", and "Is there another way to view this?"
- Encourage specific responses and reasons for students' viewpoints with questions such as, "Can you be more specific?", "Why do you think that?", and "What exactly do you mean by that?"
- Encourage students to see the problem, situation, or concept from a different viewpoint. If working on a math problem, for example, ask the tutee if he or she can think of another way to solve the problem, "What would happen if we changed the order in which we solved the problem?" When working on a history issue, ask "How might this issue have looked to the opposing side?"
- Help students talk through problems. Encourage them to think out loud and model this yourself by vocalizing your own thought processes, trying to implement specific reasoning skills as you do so. This fosters better thinking in students by enabling them to evaluate their own process and serves as a means to understand the student's thought process. It also enables you to discover where errors in thought occur.
- Encourage students to begin generating questions of their own. Show them how to build simple questions from the table of contents, chapter headings, and main idea statements using the six "journalistic questions" – who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- Have students analyze their own work, looking for patterns in their thinking and in their mistakes.
- Pay attention to where tutees are in the process. As long as they are able to respond effectively to your probing, continue asking questions. If they become frustrated or seem lost, you will want to provide more guidance.
- Lengthen your response time. It takes time to think, and tutees may be anxious, particularly if they feel they are put on the spot, and this causes the mind to go blank.
- Remember that thinking is hard work. Be gentle with those you are tutoring and give lots of support, encouragement, and reinforcement.

Source: Suzanne Forster. "How Tutors Can Help Tutees Improve Their Critical Thinking." The CRLA Tutor Training Handbook.

Tips for Writing Tutors

Writing tutors have the opportunity to assist with individual and small group needs. In either situation, writing tutors *do not simply edit or "correct" papers*. Instead, they enter into a dialogue with students about their writing in an effort to make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses in content, clarity, and grammar. It is not only important for writing tutors to be aware of the rules of language and writing—effective writing tutors inspire confidence and appreciation of language in student writing. This can be difficult since most students find writing intimidating, mysterious, and difficult. But with one-on-one help, many students discover their talents and eliminate their mistakes.

Some things for writing tutors to remember:

- ✓ At the beginning of the session, ask the student what they want to focus on. If they have problems being specific, ask them what the most difficult part was to write or what they don't like about their paper. See below.
- ✓ **Limit sessions to one hour.** There is no way you and the student can revise and edit one paper in one seating.
- ✓ When a student questions their thesis statement's effectiveness, or you determine that it is not effective, ask the student to tell you what their main purpose is in writing this paper; what do they want to tell their audience?
- ✓ When revising for organization and focus, read each paragraph and note the main point in the margin beside each paragraph. This will help to write topic sentences, outline the logic flow of the paper, and help the student determine what information might be off subject or out of place.
- ✓ One of the main goals of a writing tutor should be to encourage the student to make time and effort for prewriting. Therefore, it is essential to practice, demonstrate, and discuss the types of and benefits of prewriting.
- ✓ Some student might not have started writing their paper yet, but want you to help them come up with a topic, thesis, or outline. In this instance, it is important not to give too much help, but to ask questions in order to make the student think critically and come to their own conclusions. Mapping or free-writing could be particularly useful in this case.
- ✓ Sometimes reading a paper aloud can help the student to recognize grammar and proofreading errors. Reading aloud also appeals to auditory learners.
- ✓ If you are reviewing a paper that has several grammar errors, you might correct *and discuss* the error one or two times. After that, you might underline or mark sentences with grammar errors and talk them out together, asking why you might have underlined it.
- ✓ Looking at a paper with several grammar mistakes might be overwhelming and you might want to "fix" the errors. However, the point of tutoring is to help students become more independent learners. Therefore, you can help them recognize their patterns of error and provide them with review and resources so that they can start editing for those mistakes.
- ✓ You and the student will have to decide whether you want to focus on content, revision, or editing. If you try to do all three, you will not have a very productive session. You will usually leave the writer with more questions.

Tutoring Scenarios and Potential Problems

Regardless of preparation, there may still be occasional problems. Below are some common problems and suggestions for handling them.

Tutee Comment: "My assignment is due tomorrow. Will you help me?"

Tutor Response: "Let's take a look at the type of problem you have. We'll work on something similar, so that you'll be able to do the assignment." Remember: It is not your job to do students' homework assignments. If you do, the students will not learn how to do the work on their own. Waiting until the last minute to do assignments may also be a sign of poor time management skills. Model time management behavior in your sessions.

Tutee Comment: "I've already done my homework. I just need you to check it for me."

Tutor Response: " If you'll show me the areas you're worried about, we'll discuss those problems in general and take a look at your book. Then, you can check your homework." Remember: It is not your job to make sure that everything a tutee turns in is perfect. Helping students with specific homework problems is not what you were hired to do. Review similar homework problems and help the student develop the critical thinking skills necessary to do his/her homework assignment independently. Tutees must learn how to check their own work and how to have confidence in the answers they give. If they can do this, they will:

- Be able to defend their answers.
- Understand more completely.
- Develop better self esteem.
- Become more independent.

Tutee Comment: "I've written this paper that I have to give in Spanish to my class. Will you help me?" (Translation: "I did get it written in English, but I can't write it in Spanish. Will you do the translation for me?")

Tutor Response: "You've gotten off to a good start. You have the paper written. Do as much of the translation as you can. I can't help you with that. But, once you've done as much as you can, right or wrong, then I'll see what type of problems you're having. We'll work on those areas. Then, you can go back and **finish your paper.**" It's not your job to do students' assignments. They need to learn how to do work on their own.

Tutee Comment: "Come on. I'm your friend. Help me out here. I need you. I can't come during your scheduled times. Can't you make an exception for me?"

Tutor Response(s): "I know how tough it is. With my classes and work, I rarely have any spare time either." "Have you considered forming a study group with others in your class?" "Have you checked to see what your instructor's office hours are?" "We also have other **TWC** tutors. Have you checked to see if any of their hours coincide with your free time?" Remember: It's really

hard to say no - especially to someone who considers you a friend. Although it is difficult, saying no will help the tutee take responsibility for his/her own learning. You should not be the sole resource for your tutee.

Tutee Comment: "This instructor is really crazy. I think she's out to get me."

Tutor Response: "Sounds like you're having a bad time. I'm sorry you're finding it difficult to succeed in this class. Perhaps you could show me some of the problems you are having difficulty understanding. I may be able to help clarify them for you. We may also need to review how you are studying for this class. You may have to invest more study time so that lectures are more meaningful and less stressful." Remember: Regardless of how an instructor is performing, it will not help the student by complaining with them. The student will still have to find a way to understand the material and pass the course. *Avoid talking about instructors.* Students sometimes use this as an excuse for doing poorly. The more you help them find ways to learn effectively, the less dependent they will be on learning ALL the material through lectures and class time. (Also, remember that anything you say about the instructor will get back to that instructor, which will reflect negatively on the TWC.)

Tutee Comment: "Nothing works. I just can't get it. I study all the time. I don't know what to do."

Tutor Response: "If you want, you can take a quick test to determine your learning style. It's fun, and it doesn't take very long. Once you know whether you learn better by seeing, doing, or hearing, we'll both be able to figure out study strategies to help you." Sometimes the students really are studying but in a non-beneficial manner. The TWC has resources to help with study skills; you may want to refer the student for mentoring.

Tutee Comment: "I can't take it anymore. I'm dropping out."

Tutor Response: "I'm sorry to hear that. Before you make any decisions, why don't you talk to Counseling Services? They may be able to help you find another alternative." Remember, the student may be having family problems, emotional problems, or something other than academic problems that are contributing to his/her feelings of hopelessness. If so, this situation is beyond your job scope. Please make a referral to someone with more training.

Source: Three Rivers Community College

http://www.trcc.commnet.edu/Ed_Resources/TASC/Training/Potential_Problems.htm

Referral Skills

Peer tutoring sessions can often bring with them a wide variety of issues. Tutees are often comfortable enough with the tutoring relationship to ask the tutor for advice about any number of things. Thus, a tutor must be knowledgeable about the types and locations of campus services available to students and how to access those services.

Recognizing When to Refer Tutees to Services

- If a tutee is using tutoring time inappropriately (i.e. using tutoring time to socialize or to discuss personal issues, repeatedly coming to tutoring unprepared)
- If the tutee is very tense, shy, non-verbal, and uncommunicative
- If the tutee's behavior changes dramatically from earlier tutoring sessions
- If the tutee exhibits any of the following behaviors:
 - Depression: general sadness, slow moving, weepy, hopeless or very agitated, nervous, worried, unable to focus on academics
 - Anxiety: agitated, unable to focus, hyper, consistently fearful, acting startled
 - Signs of substance abuse: failing to meet obligations, erratic behavior, inability to function effectively

Knowing How and Where to Refer Tutees to Services

- Tutors should discuss a problem situation with the TWC Coordinator. Tutors need to understand that the tutee's problems are not the sole responsibility of the tutor. The TWC Coordinator might need to intervene to insure that the right services are initiated for the tutee.
- Offer information to the tutee about available support services (Academic Skills Center, Online Tutoring, Labs). Ask the TWC Coordinator for a list of Student Support Services if needed.
- Suggest a particular service to the tutee as appropriate, explaining its location, services, hours, etc. The tutor could accompany the tutee if the tutee desires. However, the tutee is the one who should make the initial phone call or contact.

Important Reminders

- Tutors ARE NOT trained psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, health care personnel, or counselors. Tutors should not exceed the role as a peer tutor. Tutors should always go to the TWC Coordinator if there is an issue that needs attention.
- Tutors ARE NOT expected to solve all problems for their tutees. The primary focus as a tutor should be on course work, not on a tutee's personal problems.
- Tutors MAY NOT be successful with every assigned student. Tutors should recognize and acknowledge that no amount of tutoring will be enough for some students who bring their personal issues into the sessions.

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Various Resources for Tutors

- **TWC Website** – <http://www.johnstoncc.edu> then click on **Tutoring and Writing Center** under quick links: Select **“Tutor Resources”** for online resources and to download tutoring forms or click on **Writing Resources** for more information.