

Expectations for Successful Tutors

As a tutor, your role is never to give tutees answers but to help your tutees learn to find answers for themselves. Tutors, of course, do answer some questions directly, but in doing so, they model the appropriate thinking and language behavior for the particular subject.

Students who come for tutoring are struggling with a problem that they cannot solve. Sometimes the problem is vague ("I read this chapter, but I don't know what it means") or sometimes very specific ("I have worked all of the problems at the end of this chapter, and I can get the answer in the back of the book except for this one factoring problem").

Your responsibility is to help the tutee learn how to learn on his/her own. You are not responsible for just providing an answer; rather you should provide the process that the student can learn to find his/her own answers. Tutors as "model students" should be helping tutees become "master students." Tutors also help provide an open environment in which learning can take place. Tutors determine the level at which a student is struggling. Does this student understand the basic concepts? Does this student understand the vocabulary of the subject? Tutors recognize the fact that they have to work on the student's level of understanding hoping to help the student reach the tutor's level of understanding. If the student needs to understand basic concepts before going further, the tutor will spend time on the basics.

Tutors must understand that learning is a process of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Part of the reason that peer tutoring has been so successful is that students can often relate better to each other than to their instructors.

Successful peer tutors possess the following qualities:

- They welcome students and are friendly to all.
- They prepare for sessions and show up on time.
- They encourage their tutees to develop good examples and/or discover examples provided by the text.
- They show patience and provide appropriate "thinking" time for their tutees.
- They encourage their tutees.
- They routinely check their tutee's learning by having them summarize information at the end of a session.
- They are sensitive to any cultural differences among their tutees.
- They relate successful study strategies to their tutees, even during content-based tutoring.
- They use questioning rather than an answering strategy.
- They pay attention to the uniqueness of each tutee, and they are aware of any self-esteem issues for students who are struggling.