

How to Survive a Tutoring Session

Why hello there!

Let me begin by saying congratulations on being hired as a new tutor and welcome to the start of an amazing journey! Right now, you are most likely very enthusiastic and eager to tutor at the WRC for the very first time. Under all that excitement, you might be nervous and find that you're totally unprepared to begin tutoring. Well, stop right there! I am here to share my experiences as a new tutor this quarter and hopefully, I will ease your anxieties and fears.

In our EWRT 97 class, we went over the tutoring process. I learned some "minimalist tutoring" strategies that I was able to apply during my tutoring session. I like to make metacognitive statements, such as "what, why, and how," in order to clearly grasp what my tutee is trying to convey to their audience and encourage deeper discussions about their content. I also learned some communication strategies that allow me to actively listen and facilitate during my sessions. Instead of responding as an editor, I respond as a reader. I feel that it makes the tutoring session a bit more intimate. We get the opportunity to discuss their paper as if we are friends or classmates. It makes our interactions more personal and leads to building a relationship with one another. If I were to respond as an editor, I'm putting myself in an authoritative position. Having some authority as a tutor is not a bad thing, especially when you are the one facilitating the session. Responding as a reader also sounds much nicer when pointing out major mistakes in a paper because it does not put your tutee at fault. It also gives you the chance to make metacognitive statements.

Setting an agenda for a tutoring session may seem really confusing and tough to do at the beginning. I'm letting you know now that it will get better! I personally struggled in this area because usually, my tutees come in with an entire draft ready for me to look over. Their drafts can range from one page to about five pages. It's highly unlikely that you can go over the entire paper in fifty minutes, and so it's important to set an agenda and work on the major patterns of errors in regards to global versus local errors.

One important thing to remember is that not all of your tutees are the same; therefore you must not handle every tutoring session in the same way. Your tutees may come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and are at different levels of reading and writing. Most of my tutees were in higher-level English courses. They didn't have any major issues with grammar. The most common problems that I saw amongst them were struggles with forming an effective thesis statement and presenting their ideas clearly. With my ESL tutees, the most common problems were incorrect verb forms and run-on sentences. I deal with each of my tutees based on their strengths and weaknesses. Being able to adapt to different kinds of tutees will definitely help you relate to and be more comfortable with your tutees, resulting in a tutoring session that will be more effective.

Just remember to take a deep breath before each session and know that everything will turn out fine. You may have those days where you wish a session could have gone better or you feel as though you've been no help. We have all gone through that before. Don't let it bring you down. These minor roadblocks will help you develop into a better tutor. Best wishes! (: