

# Definition of Tutoring

“Tutor” is a word that is very hard to define. Tutoring means very different things to different people. Most recognize that a tutor has excelled in a particular area of study, but some believe that tutors are substitutes for teachers, or that tutors will do (or check) their homework for them. Some think of tutors as encyclopedias or a solutions manual. A thesaurus lists as synonyms of “tutor” the words coach, educator, guide, mentor, instructor.

Reflect on your own definition of tutoring. What does “being a tutor” mean to you? As a tutor, what are your responsibilities? List five things that you associate with “good” tutoring.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Compare your list within your group. Discuss why you responded as you did, and discuss the qualities of a “good” tutor.

Compare your group lists to the guidelines listed below regarding attributes of successful tutoring. Share your group’s additional attributes with everyone.

## ***Guidelines To Help You Be a Successful Tutor:***

- Focus on strategies rather than facts.
- Encourage tutee responsibility for his/her own learning, guide the tutee, and get the tutee actively involved in the learning process.
- Engage the tutee in question-generating activities.
- Help the tutee connect prior knowledge to new concepts.
- Demonstrate application of content material.
- Use strengths to remediate tutee weaknesses. Don’t only focus on what is wrong – concentrate on the tutee’s strengths to build confidence.
- Present the tutee with alternate methods of learning.
- Guide your tutee toward doing his or her own work. Get the student as actively involved in the learning process as possible. Lead the student toward the answer, rather than telling the answers.

- Be honest, patient, and sincere.
- Be clever, creative, and flexible. You may constantly need to devise new ways of presenting information and strategies, as well as ways for the tutee to practice.
- Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know. Having the tutee observe you looking for an answer or explanation is another tutoring tool. The tutor is not expected to know everything!
- Don't feel guilty if the tutee doesn't do well on an assignment or task. Remember that the work is ultimately the student's. Review what the student did well, the mistakes made, and the steps to getting back on track.
- Do not comment negatively to students on professors' grading policies, their teaching, or their personalities.
- Evaluate students' work in terms of the progress they have made in the tutorial, rather than in terms of a grade. **Never** suggest that the student will (or should) get a good grade.
- Know when and how to refer a student for professional guidance.
- Introduce yourself to faculty in the courses you tutor in order to determine how to best serve the needs of the students. Work with faculty to encourage students to seek help early, and to determine customary areas of difficulty in their courses.

With your group, choose 3 of the above guidelines that are most important to you. Share with everyone why your group chose each guideline.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

As a tutor, you are a vital part of the academic support network here. You are able to provide additional resources to help students understand the class material and improve study skills. You will be guiding students through the process of becoming an independent learner. Your work here matters and your efforts are appreciated!