Conducting Sessions

The Tutoring Cycle

In this session we'll look at the steps involved in conducting the tutoring session. These steps will help you to tutor effectively and efficiently and help the tutee to become a more independent learner.

STEP 1: GREETING, setting a positive tone for the session
"Hi, how are you?"
- Greet learner by name.
- Be friendly with the learner (smile, polite, etc.). A smile goes a long way in setting the tutee at ease.
- Arrange physical seating and set a positive, task-directed atmosphere. Students should be able to easily see and hear you and each other. Otherwise, some students have an easier time being part of the group than others. Move chairs, desks, as needed. If one-to-one, sit side by side with the work in front of the student or between you. Usually, you would want to sit the right of a right-hander, to the left of a left-hander.
- If appropriate, review the previous meeting.

STEP 2: IDENTIFICATION OF TASK, determining the purpose of the session
"What's up?", "How is the class going?"
- Provide opportunity for the learner to state the task for the session. This keeps the student in charge of his/her own learning.
- Use questions to clarify the learner's immediate concerns. Asking questions like "Where did you start to get confused?" reinforces the fact that the tutee knows something and that you will be building on that prior knowledge.
- Restate the learner's problem to help the learner's understanding of what is needed to focus on the task.
- It is much better to be sure now that the topic is clearly identified than spending tutoring time on topics the student doesn't need help with.

"The whole is greater than the sum of the parts."
- Encourage independent learning by asking the learner to break the task into smaller parts.

STEP 3: SETTING AN AGENDA
"What is the plan?"
- Involve the learner in setting an informal agenda.
- State the procedure/agenda explicitly for the task. It is always helpful for the learner to know what to expect of the session.
- Readjust the procedure when necessary to meet the needs of the learner.

STEP 4: ADDRESS THE TASK
"How can we do it?" **Identify the underlying thought process for the task and where to find needed information.**

- Ask the learner to explain his/her general approach for learning this type of problem (thought process, skills, concepts, etc.). This promotes independence as the student is examining his/her own learning process.
- Remember the course materials (textbook, handouts, lecture notes, etc.) are the source of information, **not** the tutor. Don't process course information and explain it to the student. Show the students how to use the materials and process for themselves.
- Help the learner understand general strategies or techniques for this type of problem. You are looking for the student to solve this *type* of problem, not this *particular* problem. Be sure the student takes notes for later referral.

"One step at a time…"
- Encourage the learner to address the task without overly directing him/her.
- Appropriately respond but do not interrupt learner's thinking. Silence is an important part of tutoring!
- Use the Socratic method of questioning effectively.
- Have the student explain to you what he/she has just learned or how to do another similar problem. If you just ask if the student understands, he or she will probably say "Yes", whether or not it is true.
- Reinforce specific accomplishments. "You did a good job solving that equation by factoring."
- Correct mistakes in a positive manner. Find something positive to say first, then suggest a correction. For example, "You did the first three steps perfectly, but I'd like you to take another look at step four. Do you see what you need to do differently?" If the student doesn't see the mistake, guide with Socratic questioning.

STEP 5: CLOSING
"What next?"
- Before ending the session, spend some time making sure the learner knows how to take the next steps. How will the skill or technique be applied to future assignments?
- Review what's been accomplished, summarize the session. "Today we really worked hard on (_____) and I think you're really understanding it better."
- Set goals for the next session. Let the student know what to expect for the next session and what he/she needs to do before the session. "Before the next tutoring session, be sure to do the practice exercises in your book and bring them with you to tutoring." This helps to set the expectation that the student is responsible for his/her own learning outside the tutoring session as well as in the session.
- For groups, confirm the date and time of the next session. If drop-in, invite the student to come again.

"Goodbye."
- Thank the learner for some contribution he or she made. ("Thanks for being prepared. This made efficient use of the tutoring session.")
- End the session on a positive note.

"Extra time?"
- Use any extra time to review previously learned concepts, do more challenging problems related to the material, look ahead to get a start on new material, or review study skills. The students should get their full measure with you.

Monitor – Prompt – Model

Monitor, Prompt, Model. As a UCLA tutor, these three words must become second nature to you. The order of these actions is also important. Most of the talking should be done by the students, so you can **monitor** what they are learning and where the gaps are. In order to get them to reveal what and how they are learning, you must **prompt** them to reveal their thought processes. Only when all efforts at prompting fail, should you model.

Monitor – Listen in order to find out what the students are learning and where the gaps are in their learning. During the monitor step you are trying to figure out where the student is having trouble.   (Practice Active Listening)

Prompt – Guide the students with questions. You are guiding the students so that they can find the solutions they are searching for on their own. (Practice Socratic Questioning)

Model – If all else fails, make up a sample problem and model the thinking they are trying to achieve. Remember you are not to work HW or test or quiz problems with students, but you can model by using a different question, problem, example, etc. Modeling can be an important way to help students learn, but it can also tempt students to let you do their work for them.

Key points to remember

✓ **Tutors should talk less than 50% of the time. If you are talking for more than 5 minutes at a time, you are talking too much!**

✓ **Tutors listen**

✓ **Students talk**

✓ **Tutors support students in learning how to learn**