

# Tutoring Tips

## Additional Tutoring Techniques

- 1) **Model clear thinking.** Prepare for the tutoring session and take time during the session to gather and clarify your thoughts.
- 2) **Model strategic thinking and learning.** Share a wide range of strategies that you and others have found effective and explain that developing effective strategies leads to independence. There are many study skills that are discipline specific, so part of your job is helping students understand and practice how to read, write, and study effectively for that specific discipline. For example, share memorization techniques and tricks that work for you or others and might be specific to the discipline. Also make sure you build on the skills and strategies that the tutee is already using. Research suggests that if a student has a strategy that is partially working, it is more effective to help the student adapt, adjust or refine that strategy, rather than introducing a totally new strategy.
- 3) **Suggest a variety of ways the student might practice and apply what she is learning.**
- 4) **Listen and observe a lot.** Ask a lot of questions. Monitor how much you talk and your tutee talks. Think about ways to ask questions and then how to follow-up on those questions to both diagnose the problem and guide the tutee's understanding and learning. Consider your wait time after asking a question, and consider appropriate ways to answer a student's question with another question.
- 5) **Monitor your communication with your tutee.** You may use certain words or phrases which may mean something entirely different or may mean nothing at all to your tutee. Think about the subtle as well as more obvious ways you communicate information. Consider your body language, nonverbal communication, tone of voice, pace, and wait time when you ask questions.
- 6) **Focus on critical vocabulary.** Confusion often can be traced back to misunderstandings about the major vocabulary of a discipline.
- 7) **Don't be afraid to go back to basics**
- 8) **Consider both your learning style and the tutee's learning style.** They may match or they may not. Think about ways to share information in several different formats, for example auditorily, visually, or kinesthetically. The course professor or the PLTC Director of Programs may be able to help you.

- 9) **Suggest a variety of ways to ask for help** and share the situations and ways you have asked for help. Everyone needs help at times and students need to understand that Wellesley encourages help-seeking behaviors.
- 10) **Consider ways of breaking ideas and tasks into smaller parts** and ways of making the information or skills as concrete as possible. Try to think about a teaching progression that moves from the concrete to the semi-concrete to the abstract.
- 11) **Review with the student her class or reading notes** to see whether she is differentiating the key information from the less relevant or organizing information in a logical and effective way. Teach ways to take notes more effectively.
- 12) **Suggest that the student join a study group**. Study groups help everyone, those who are working successfully in a course and those struggling.
- 13) **Encourage the student to attend the professor's weekly office hours**. It's important to continue asking the professor for help while working with a tutor.
- 14) **Suggest that a student goes to the APT Study Skills Workshops** given throughout the semester in the residence halls.
- 15) **Consider whether the tutee's difficulties might be the result of a language based problem**. If the tutee is not a native speaker of English or has a learning disability, consider a consultation with the PLTC Director of Programs or the Director of the Writing Program.
- 16) **Talk with other tutors about their approaches and strategies that work**. Brainstorm alternatives, but remember to maintain confidentiality about specific students.

#### **And Finally...**

- 17) **Don't do the work for the student**. Your tutee needs to understand that your job is to help her develop effective learning strategies and find answers for herself, not to give her the answers. In this process you will need to focus both on asking questions and on modeling clear thinking, strategies, and behaviors.
- 18) **Don't hold a pencil**. This is hard to do, but is important. All the writing should be done by the tutee to make sure she is doing the work.