

Tutoring Tips

The Tutee's Active Involvement

Research shows that active involvement enhances learning and leads to independence. Your job is to suggest ways a student can be actively involved and then to model those learning behaviors. (Remember that during the tutoring session the tutee, not you, should be doing the work.) Here are some suggestions.

- Probe the student's background knowledge and help her to connect the new to the known. One of the critical elements in understanding is the information or data a student already holds in her memory. A student brings this knowledge to the task and then constructs new knowledge or restructures existing knowledge.
- Teach the student to ask questions, predict, and then seek answers. These mental processes of asking and seeking allow students to build meaning over time and as more information is added. The focus of tutoring becomes learning how to learn rather than just finding answers.
- Show the student how to set clear purposes for learning. Have the student analyze her class and task. Having a purpose for reading, studying, or thinking influences what one understands and learns.
- Teach the student to think about her own thinking and how she learns. Effective learners consciously monitor their thinking and control it through implementing a wide range of strategies. Consider demonstrating how to "think aloud." For example, you might model out loud the way you generate questions as you read and then predict and seek the answers. You might also share some mistakes you have made, how you learned from them, and how you monitored for further difficulties.
- Ask the student to verbalize, rephrase, and summarize what you have explained and what they have learned. Putting information into one's own words solidifies understanding and helps memory.
- Focus on organization of ideas (as well as time, space and materials). Problems may occur because a student doesn't understand: 1) how to arrange information according to meaningful classifications, 2) how to fit the new information into what she already holds in her memory, or 3) how the author uses organization to represent ideas and meet a particular purpose. Consider using graphic organizers or maps as another way of presenting the organization of information.