

# Tutoring Tips

## **Be patient**

It is often tempting to simply give the tutee the answer to a difficult problem, but this approach is not beneficial. Instead, try giving hints in the form of questions. Ask questions to help the tutee progress step-by-step. This technique helps the tutee reason through the problems. If the tutee is still struggling, ask her to explain the basic concepts to you. Often this will make the tutee realize her mistakes.

## **Be understanding**

Determine the tutee's background knowledge by asking review questions. It is also helpful to examine mistakes the tutee has made on previous homework or exams to see if there is a pattern. Try to approach the problem from the tutee's perspective. Ask to see the tutee's notes and listen fully to the tutee's question before answering it. However, don't engage in negative conversations about the professor. Remembering your own experience, have realistic expectations and don't cover too much information in one session.

## **Make the tutee feel comfortable**

Because many students are apprehensive about seeking help, it is important that tutees feel comfortable. Start with questions you know the tutee can answer to build confidence. Talk positive to the tutee, congratulate her for the material she does know, and praise improvement. Never laugh or make fun of a tutee, but a little bit of humor helps to ease the frustration. Make good eye contact and don't talk too fast. Most importantly be friendly, flexible, and punctual.

## **Explain things multiple ways**

If a student doesn't understand something, try to explain it another way. Relating concepts to practical examples often makes the concepts easier to grasp. Ask the tutee the main idea of the section and try using visual aids such as analogies and diagrams. When problem solving, break down your process into small steps. Have the tutee write as much as possible and encourage her to repeat what you have explained. Then ask the tutee to apply these steps to another problem without your assistance.

## **Ask for additional instructions from the department**

Ask the department at the beginning of the semester for a copy of the syllabus. Also ask if there is a particular topic that usually gives students the most difficulty and where this topic falls in the syllabus. Don't forget to use your own notes and textbooks to help the student figure out the problem and if you're not sure about something double-check it before you suggest the solution.

# Especially for...

## **Drop in Tutors**

In drop-in sessions make each tutee feel equally important. Help one student at a time; however, if the number of students overwhelms you suggest that they work together. Don't be afraid to tell a tutee that she needs to work on her own first and encourage all tutees to prepare specific questions. If a student is really struggling in a drop-in tutoring session, suggest that she request a one-on-one tutor.

## ***One-on-One Tutors***

Plan out each session in order to maximize tutoring time. Ask the tutee by email before the session exactly what she is having difficulty with so that you can plan the session accordingly. Make a list of what the tutee wants you to cover and a study guide of the important aspects of each lesson. Spend the last five minutes of the session planning for next week.