

PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR TUTORING

Often as a mentor, you will find that your mentee may need help with their school work. Here are some pointers from a tutoring manual that may be helpful if you find yourself taking on the role of a tutor during your mentoring relationship.

1. Start at a Level of Sure Success.

Beginning instruction on the child's level will give your student a feeling of success and will encourage more interest and positive attitudes for later learning activities. It is important to become acquainted with your student's interests and abilities as quickly as possible in order to give work that can be mastered. Then the student may move to more challenging work.

2. Plan a Well-Balanced Lesson.

Some attention should be given to study skills when you begin the tutoring session. Establish a routine that you follow each session. For example, if you begin with reading, always begin with reading and move through the tutoring session in an established order. Children like structure and feel more confident when they know what is coming next. Try to involve the young person actively in learning. Whenever possible, invent games to reinforce skill. If you have trouble thinking of a design for a game, use the format of a television game show such as *Jeopardy!* or *Wheel of Fortune*.

3. Establish a Working Relationship.

Establish a friendly but professional atmosphere from the beginning of the tutoring sessions. Make sure that your student is actively engaged in the learning process at all times. Have a clear idea about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior during the tutoring session and communicate these guidelines calmly but firmly to your student whenever the need arises.

4. Understand the Learning Process.

Learning occurs in three stages. First, a student hears or sees the concepts and understands them. Next, the student internalizes the material, and the information becomes a part of his or her storehouse of knowledge. Finally, the student transfers the learning to new situations. For example, after learning the concept of fractions and being able to calculate them, the child might apply these concepts and skills to a baking project. Look for these three steps as you progress in your tutoring.

5. Diagnose Constantly

During each session, be prepared to diagnose as well as teach. Each lesson should be designed to teach a specific skill or body of knowledge. As the lesson proceeds, the tutor must determine whether the young person is ready to move on to something new. If the skill is not yet mastered, provide further instruction or practice. If your young person seems to be stuck on a particular concept, try another approach. Ask for help from other tutors or mentors or staff members if you need further ideas.

6. Affirm Often

This is the most important ingredient in your relationship. Affirmation builds the self-esteem and trust fundamental to all learning.

Examples: "You did a super job!"
"High five!"
"You did that especially well."