

ACADEMIC SUPPORT TUTORING HANDBOOK: GUIDELINES & SUGGESTIONS

Congratulations! We are delighted that you've accepted a leadership position as a tutor at Reed College. Peer tutoring is a core component of Academic Support at Reed. While tutoring should never replace faculty assistance, it can make all the difference in a student's quest for academic excellence.

Tutoring is a popular resource. In 2014-2015, 233 tutors provided ~1,400 hours of individual tutoring and met individually with ~300 students in 72 different classes. In addition, ~350 students signed into the DoJo for a total of ~1,700 visits.

A faculty member has recommended you because you are seen as someone with the background, communication skills, patience, and solid academic standing to take on this responsibility. Your role is an important one. To help facilitate your tutoring experience, and that of your tutees, we've collected some information that we think will prove useful to you in the tutoring process.

Getting Started

To be a tutor:

- You must be recommended by a faculty member to tutor a specific course or subject.
- You must have a cumulative Reed GPA of 3.0.
- You must attend a new tutor orientation.

To get paid:

- If this is your first on-campus job, you will need to complete employment paperwork (bring two forms of government ID) with Dawn Derry in the Business Office (Eliot 307).
 - International students will have to complete additional paperwork.
- For every tutoring shift that you work, you will need to complete two steps in order to be paid. We recommend developing the habit of completing both of these steps shortly after each of your tutoring sessions.
 - First, you need to log your shift on Reed's online payroll system, available at bannerweb.reed.edu. Resources to help with Banner/GPS payroll are available at www.reed.edu/gps/gps_student.html
 - Second, you need to submit notes for your shift to explain to us why you are being paid for that time. Instructions and links to our tutor tracking Google forms are available at www.dojo.reed.edu/tutor_tracking. Please read this full page before submitting your first notes.
- Pay periods end at 11:59 PM Sunday, every other week. You will receive e-mail reminders at the end of each pay period to go into Banner/GPS and submit your timesheet for approval. Please submit your timesheet as soon as you are done tutoring for a pay period.
- You do not get paid for prep-time, but you do get paid for orientation and any additional training sessions or events you attend.

Throughout the year we ask for feedback from the students we tutor to help us understand student needs better, evaluate the success of our current program, and garner ideas for future tutor trainings. The information we obtain will also enable us to give you some feedback about your effectiveness as a tutor. This information comes to us, in part, through the sign-in kiosk.

Please remember to tell your tutees to sign in at every visit!

How Students Find You

Center Tutors

- Center tutors are scheduled to work regular shifts in the drop-in tutoring centers (DoJo, language lab, biology lab, or math lab) and are available to work with groups or individuals, as needed.
- Schedules, including tutor names, are available online on a password protected site. Paper copies of the schedule can be found at the DoJo.

Individual Tutors

- Students requesting tutoring will find you through their faculty, by looking on the Reed tutoring web page (<http://info.reed.edu/tutor/tutors.taf>), or by word of mouth.
- You may tutor a student no more than one hour a week per course.
- The student must be enrolled in the course for credit (auditing doesn't count).
- Students can combine their access to tutoring, so if you work with two students at a time, you can get paid for up to two hours (per week). You have to actually work those two hours, however—we don't pay you double for working just one hour even if you're helping two people.
- If a student indicates that they have a disability and would like to be tutored for more than one hour in that course, please contact David or Ryland for verification.
- If you can't tutor someone when they request help, please respond to their email promptly and please refer them back to the Reed tutor page to find another tutor. Let David or Ryland know you've "rejected" someone so that we can help him or her find another tutor.
- If you are finding yourself over-extended, feel free to remove yourself from the tutor list until you have time to take on new tutees. (You can do this by unchecking that class in your tutor page in IRIS.)

Establishing a Professional Relationship

How to respond to the first email request from a student:

- Sound excited and make the contact feel "human." Be personable!
- Establish a time and location.
- Ask them to bring a question or two, their textbook and notebook, and any other relevant materials (calculators, dictionaries, graph paper, etc.).
- Ask about their class experience.

How to start your first session:

- If possible, have your first session at the DoJo. It's a great chance to introduce students to the space and the resources up here.
- Offer your tutee a copy of the green "Tutoring at Reed" pamphlet.
- Ask questions:
 - Start a session with a new student by asking them what they want from tutoring and what questions they have about the process. Prompting students to understand their own learning needs and develop their own study plans helps motivate them towards self-sufficiency, which is the end goal in tutoring. In addition, establishing reasonable expectations upfront can help avoid difficulties later.
 - Chatting informally about their background and interest in the course may get the student actively involved and should help you assess the student's academic preparation. It will also help you both to establish goals for the tutoring relationship.

- You can also use questions as an initial diagnostic tool to establish where their understanding ends, instead of where their confusion starts.
- Listen to the answers! Practice active listening techniques.

Establish respectful guidelines:

- Both of you should agree to be on time, and determine how far in advance cancellations must be made.
- Let them know that you expect them to go to lecture, lab, and/or conference; to take notes in class (if applicable); to attempt the homework before meeting with you; and, generally speaking, to be making a good faith effort in class.
- Ask them to bring specific questions for you relating to the class or their homework to each session.
- Remind your tutees that you're not a replacement for faculty office hours, and tell them to expect you to refer them back to faculty regularly.
- Remember that this is a professional relationship even though you are peers. If your tutoring relationship blossoms into a friendship (romantic or otherwise) honestly ask yourself if you can remain professional or if you should refer your new friend to another tutor.
- At the end of the session, agree on what you will work on next time, and set up the next meeting time/place.

Effective Teaching Strategies (Tips & Tricks)

While not all of these strategies will work with every student, assignment, or subject, they're a good place to start. Review this list after you've started tutoring to see what else you can try.

- Try to break the tutee's difficulties down into manageable chunks.
- Use open-ended questions to guide the tutee in the right direction without telling them the answer.
- Focus on patterns; by learning how to do this *type* of problem, a student becomes more capable of doing similar problems in the future.
- Be specific in your comments ("that's a good strategy because...").
- If it gets frustrating, break it into smaller steps.
- Focus on progress. Reiterate what you've accomplished.
- Ask the tutee to talk through how they're doing the task by "thinking out loud."
- Give them a chance to correct themselves.
- Keep asking questions and avoid lecturing to ensure that your tutee is continuing to follow the material.
- Use analogies or hypothetical scenarios to invite your tutee to rethink the material from different angles and thereby expand their understanding and their ability to think through problems on their own.
- Whenever possible, make sure the tutee is the one holding the pencil or writing on the whiteboard, or declining a verb out loud.
 - In addition to helping the student feel confident that they can find the solutions, tutees are far more likely to retain the material if they are actively involved with it.
- As the tutor, you should try to be prepared and up-to-date with the material being covered in class. To stay informed:
 - Ask your tutee questions about what's coming next in the class.
 - Consult with faculty members teaching the courses you are tutoring.
 - Review course web pages and syllabi.
 - You are not expected to re-read textbooks or re-do practice problems.

Any help you can provide with respect to time-management, study skills, note-taking, effective lab technique, etc., will also enhance their ability to learn in other classes, not just the one you are tutoring. Refer students to the workshops offered by Academic Support. (You're welcome to attend these as well!) In addition, students can get one-on-one coaching from Academic Support staff members to develop individualized strategies for strengthening study skills. Refer tutees to David for more information. For students looking to improve quantitative skills, talk to Ryland Bell.

A few more things to keep in mind:

- **Learning Styles**
 - Understanding your tutee's learning styles and building your tutoring sessions around those strengths may make your sessions more productive.
 - Do you know how you learn best?
 - Check out these fun learning style tests:
 - <http://www.vark-learn.com> (go to "questionnaire")
 - <http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/questions.asp>
 - Remember that your tutee may learn best in a way that's different from yours.
- **Body language**
 - Use these common positive cues: turning your chair towards the tutee, nodding, maintaining regular eye contact, smiling.
 - Remember these more subtle cues: don't fold your arms, play with pens, or put your hands over your mouth.
 - Be aware that your personal comfort distance may be different from your tutees'.
- **Cultural sensitivity**
 - Students from other cultures may compose arguments in a manner that could be mistaken as an area of academic weakness.
 - Some cultures discourage students from disagreeing with authorities or challenging teachers and tutors.
 - Personal space, eye contact, speech volume, and even how questions are phrased can be very culturally weighted.
 - If you feel like mis-communicated cultural cues are interfering with your tutoring sessions, try addressing the issue directly by approaching the topic with curiosity and openness.

Learning How to Learn

Because an hour per week won't enable you to cover everything, tutors need to model strategies for finding solutions that enable students to do the work on their own. By teaching your tutees how to learn, you will:

- promote independence in learning
- provide a student perspective on learning and success at Reed
- foster self-confidence

How do we do this?

- Ask yourself: Who is doing the work? Who is doing the talking?
- At the end of a session, be sure the student knows where to go next.
- Remember, it takes a lot longer to tutor than to just do it for them.

Helping students learn on their own isn't as easy as it may seem. With practice, you'll get better at guiding without leading too strongly. Consult with David or Ryland if you're struggling with this.

Potential (and Typical) Problems for Tutors and Tutees:

A tutee expects you to do the work for them or tell them the answers:

Remind the student of the guidelines you established and that your primary goal is for them to be independent. If necessary, remind them of your shared responsibilities to uphold the Honor Principle.

An individual tutee who fails to show up for an appointment, or who shows up late:

Follow whatever guidelines you set up in your first meeting (we suggest allowing one missed appointment). Stress the student's responsibility in letting you know ahead of time (whatever time window you agreed on) if an appointment can't be kept or if they are running late. If disrespectful behavior continues, end the tutoring with an explanation why. Let David or Ryland know what happened.

A tutee who is not prepared for the session or is showing little effort:

Students may be unprepared at the first session because they don't understand what tutoring is all about. A well-structured first session can eliminate this problem. You'll most likely know that your tutee is coming ill-prepared to your sessions if you feel as though you're doing all the work. In that case, you probably are! While most students who seek tutoring are genuinely motivated to do well, some tutees might still resist hard work. If the problem continues, explain their commitment and responsibilities to tutoring, as well as yours. Review their goals and priorities for the class to ensure you are meeting their needs most effectively. Talk with them about this, but again, let them do the work. You also might try rescheduling one appointment to make it clear you're willing to work together if she/he comes prepared.

A tutee who is becoming too dependent:

Begin by reviewing your responsibilities and goals with your tutee. This explanation might help them see the limits of your job as a peer tutor. Also consider ways you can wean the student by doing less and less for them. You can also suggest another tutor.

An angry student or one who is overly demanding:

Just because tutoring is a service you are providing for compensation does not make it ok for anyone to be aggressive, mean, hostile or condescending to you. Ever. This is an Honor Principle issue at its core, and if it doesn't feel like your tutee can see this, end the current session and either:

- 1) re-schedule with the understanding that they need to come back to the next session when they can behave in a respectful way, or
- 2) let them know that they will need to meet with David or Ryland before they can have more tutoring. If you choose this option, let David or Ryland know what happened and they will meet with the student to discuss what's going on.

A tutee who is insisting on an immediate session when you don't have time:

It's sometimes hard to say no, but demanding behavior should not be encouraged; it sets a bad precedent and creates unrealistic expectations for the future. If you don't have time to meet, they can meet with another tutor or see their faculty.

A tutee who complains about the professor:

You may encounter a student who expresses their difficulties with a particular course by blaming poor teaching or a “bad” professor. While a shared opinion about that professor might strengthen your personal relationship with your tutee, it is unprofessional and will ultimately sidetrack the tutee from mastering the material.

During drop-in hours, too many students asking for help at once:

In the tutoring centers, our basic model is first-come, first-served, which, as our center feedback confirms, can be frustrating for visitors on an especially busy night. Try a triage system that might identify common problems within the group, getting everyone busy, and then rotating, spending a few minutes with each student and then having them work as you move on to another. You can also consider asking students to work together, explain information to each other, and share their approaches to a problem. Please let David or Ryland know if crowding becomes a pattern and we can consider adding more tutors to that shift.

A tutee whose academic difficulties appear to be more extensive than just one course or more than you can address through tutoring:

Encourage them to see their course instructor and/or David or Ryland. As a tutor, you are there to help facilitate learning, but the instructor has the ultimate charge. Think about what questions you could help the student formulate as they prepare to meet with their professor. Struggling in multiple courses may be a sign of personal, health, psychological, or disability-related difficulties that could require a combination of resources and/or time away to solve. Refer tutees to Student Services so we can coordinate efforts to support students in academic crisis.

A tutee that divulges personal/health issues:

Be human and caring, but recognize that you are not a clinician. Encourage the student to go to Health and Counseling. If the student does or says anything that gives you reason to be concerned about them, let David, Ryland, or someone else in Student Services know right away. Which leads us to...

Where to Go for Help

Effective tutors are resourceful. You are encouraged to consult with faculty regarding course content and concepts. Since your goal (and challenge) is to nurture independent problem solving in your tutee, you should help them formulate good questions to ask their instructor and suggest ways to approach their instructor if the student expresses some hesitation.

In addition to faculty, you might find it useful to refer tutees to Student Services resources.

Our new website for tutors offers links to all of our online tutor resources, and electronic copies of documents for tutors (including this one!). Please consider bookmarking www.dojo.reed.edu/for_tutors.

Contact David Gruber or Ryland Bell with any questions about the tutoring program or to discuss concerns you might have about a particular student.