

Downey High School Writing Center

Tutors Talk!

2021-2022
Volume 4

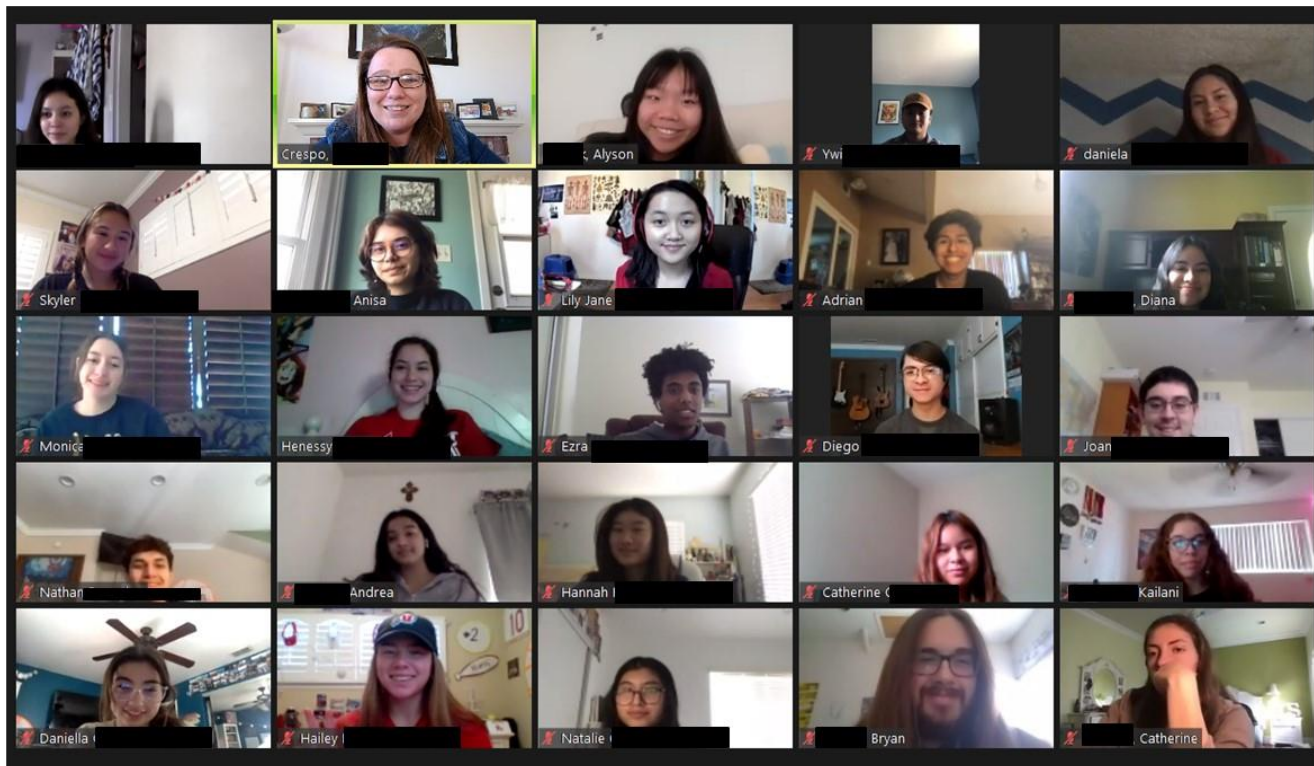


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Preface
Kelly Crespo

Even while finishing the craziest of school years and the craziest of AP testing schedules, our writing center tutors put together this collection of reflection and advice for the incoming 2021-2022 staff, which will be our largest group to date. This group of tutors will need to navigate the return to in-person tutoring while incorporating some of the moves we made, learned, and wanted to keep from our year online. Surely, this will make for some unique *Tutors Talk* contributions at the end of this year, perhaps on topics we can't even predict at this point in time.

In this collection, I see themes of empathy and compassion woven through all thirteen essays. This has clearly been a part of writing center work since we began the program in 2013, but more so than other years, the idea of trying to understand our tutees and fellow tutors and put ourselves in their shoes has clearly been on our all of tutors' minds as they were asked to contribute to this volume. I invite readers to look for these threads of empathy as they consume so many other nuggets of experienced, relatable advice.

Last year, I wrote an introduction commenting on how our flexibility and ability to survive in *Tutors Talk* Volume 3, thinking it would be an anomaly and that certainly by next year things would be back to normal. Of course, the word "normal" now has become almost obsolete as we are constantly being asked to adapt and reconfigure and change. Our tutors were able to do this, and I am confident that we'll be able to do it again this year as we continue to maneuver through the expected and unexpected work we'll encounter together.

Finding Your Keys to Growth

Catherine Semaan

As we continue to face the constant wall of uncertainty, the Writing Center might change in the new year. I began my journey as a tutor online. Considerably, a very nerve wracking way to start in a position of leadership. However, over time, I learned that I was experiencing growth without noticing it. Holding the title of a Writing Center Tutor is a responsibility that should be honored and respected because you are in a position that can inspire students. You, as a tutor, can watch students grow and develop as writers. This only emphasizes the fulfillment factor that comes with working in the Writing Center. Although starting out as a new tutor can be scary, I'd like to share with you some helpful methods of thinking that continued to grow my confidence and self-trust in being a Writing Center tutor.

Some Common Misconceptions:

I've noticed through my tutee experience that the concept of a writing center tutor is different for each student. To summarize, some students misunderstand the meaning of a Writing Center tutor-- we don't "do the work" we "encourage the student to work" in a way that can help them reflect upon their own writing. Remember that a writing center appointment takes two ways to work, it isn't one sided. This can sometimes be a challenge to adapt to, however, if the student is completely uninteractive then Mrs. Crespo is always there to communicate with and together, you can both find a solution to the problem. I brought this manner about because at the beginning of my time as a Writing Center tutor, I thought it was my fault that the student failed to be interactive. Communication is key in the Writing Center Staff, we are fortunate enough to have such bright, motivated students to talk to and ask for advice from. Please don't be afraid to ask us any questions because we have been in these positions before and still have a lot to learn from one another. To conclude, communication this year really helped strengthen my self confidence as a tutor. I know it's easier said than done, but trust in your abilities. You are here for a reason and Mrs. Crespo sees the talent in you that will continue to grow with time.

The Coolest Part:

Without a doubt, having returning students is my favorite part of being a writing center tutor. Sometimes this takes a while to happen, and sometimes it doesn't. That is perfectly okay. Having "x" amount of returning students doesn't define your talents as a tutor. In fact, I only had one reoccurring student and she changed my life. I know, it sounds a little absurd, but as she was one of my first tutees, she changed my outlook on being a tutor so much. Having known that a student connected with me and not only understood the feedback, but worked to apply it to her writing made my year so fulfilling. I witnessed her evolution as a writer this year, and knowing that my appointments with her were productive made me feel a great sense of gratitude. Those kinds of individuals create an amazing impact on you as a tutor, and them as a student learner. In essence, the experiences I had with a reoccurring student helped me to trust in myself a lot more and I feel confident that building your own connections will clarify the normal introductory nerves this year.

Conclusively, being a writing center tutor is a journey that allows you to feel comfortable in your own skin while making as many alterations as you need to get there.

How to be More of a Help and Less of an Editor **Iris Vargas**

The first thing someone associates with tutoring, especially for a paper, is editing. Including myself.

When I first started getting familiar with the Writing Center, I thought being a tutor was nothing but looking over a paper and editing, which is far from it now that I am a tutor. I have to admit, I thought it would be quite easy to help someone with their paper, as it only has to be edited, right?

Wrong.

The first mistake any new tutor might do is to skim through a paper and point out where something can be 'fixed'. There is nothing to be 'fixed' in someone's paper! Writing has no right answer and should reflect that tutee's style. That's why you as a tutor should not be integrating your own opinions because then, it is not that tutee's original thoughts. Although reading a tutee's paper and wanting to fix anything you think is wrong is tempting, it should not be done.

There are a couple of things I do when I find myself in this mindset when tutoring.

The first is to remember, you are here to help and not to edit. Pointing out a specific thing in someone's paper doesn't help them. In fact, it might make them confused because they might've not seen anything wrong with it. If there is something you find to be inconsistent, phrase it into a question that sparks an idea instead of saying to change it. For example, if a tutee's quote doesn't match their claim, you can ask "Why did you pick this quote? What does it add to the claim?" instead of saying something like, "you can pick a better quote." Not only does that make the tutee think about their quote, it provides more help. A vague telling of "you can pick a better quote" doesn't help them. It doesn't get them thinking, it only makes them lost.

It's also important to remember that you are supposed to make them understand what is being asked of them! Sometimes I had tutees that expected the brain-storming to be done for them. I would ask a simple question about what they've written so far, such as "What do you think you can do to strengthen your analysis?" I would receive most times from tutees like these, an "I don't know, what do you think I can do?"

While you might have an answer to this, we as tutors shouldn't write these papers; which is why it's so important to make sure they know what is being asked of them. While this encounter is rare, it happens. A way I approach this situation is to always ask the tutee questions. They don't have to be complex, just simple questions that will get the tutee thinking and eventually brainstorming their ideas to you!

This is why asking your tutee questions about what led them to certain aspects of their writing is crucial. It's what I've noticed makes them think and realize why they write the way they do. It helps them understand their writing, and in turn makes them strengthen their skills. It also works on yours, and with each session you complete, you become an even better tutor (not editor)!

The Math in Writing **Naomi Villescas**

The title scared you, didn't it? Don't worry - if I had seen that title a year ago, I too would have been a bit confused (if not, shaken).

When applying to become a writing center tutor, I'm sure math was the last thing on your mind. I'm sure you applied because you want to help others; I'm sure you had this master plan for how you'd want every session to go. Both compassion and drive are great qualities to have as a tutor - don't get me wrong - but I'm also sure, however, that you do feel a sense of uncertainty that is only natural prior to tackling an unfamiliar task. There is no shame in any pre-session anxiety you're experiencing - we've all been there, trust me. I remember myself during the weeks that preceded my first session: nervous, anxious, and plagued with questions regarding how I would go about helping someone fix their paper in a mere thirty minutes.

That's where the math comes in! Math is orderly and structured - quite possibly two reasons why you may have gravitated towards the art of writing in the first place. Personally, I enjoy the way math always has a solution and a clear way to get there. Where writing is ambiguous and less restrictive, math's basic principles provide reassuring support for those who dare to tackle the intimidating subject. This aspect is great for those who need a little guidance on where to begin when presented with a problem. Writing compared to math is like bowling without the bumpers - less restrictive, more risk involved - however, if we apply the concept of structure as we see it in math to writing, helping someone through the struggles of writing a piece becomes much more clear a task.

Think of PEMDAS. Those who took math in middle school are probably having flashbacks right now, but don't fret (I know you didn't sign up for a math lesson). Whenever you'd start a problem, PEMDAS would be there to guide the way, as there was an exact order you needed to follow in order to get the correct solution. If we were to apply this "order of operations" to tutees' writing, things would become much easier for the tutor, and much clearer and organized for the tutee.

To put it simply, adhering to a "to-do" list where the importance of each element is ranked would benefit you and your future tutees immensely. Over the past year, I've broken it down into aspects of a piece that can apply to most essays tutees bring in: thesis, analysis, transitions, and style and grammar.

Addressing a tutee's thesis first is crucial to the tutoring process, which is why I always aim to start there in every session I have. The thesis, generally, is the meat of the paper because it elucidates precisely where the tutee's piece is going and includes what they'll specifically be covering in their papers. It's a great way to not only preview a paper, but it also clues you (as the tutor) in to any flaws with the way they answered the prompt they were given. Make sure to ask clarifying questions regarding anything that sounds vague, and also make sure the tutee gives you a background on what they're writing about.

After looking at the thesis, analysis is what I tend to focus on with my tutees. Analysis is the part of the paper where a writer's voice should be distinct and easy to hear, so looking at this portion second is crucial. Voice is what makes a paper memorable and cohesive; it makes readers believe in what the writer is saying and understand the writer's purpose better. Fine tuning this with your tutee and making sure evidence is connected back to the thesis (which you've already looked at by this point!) is imperative for a successful session.

Once you read and help refine the tutee's analysis portions, if there's still time left, you can go back and help fix grammatical errors and elevate their writing style. This is a finishing touch, and thus, should really come last in a session. Spelling and grammar are easily remedied by a spell check too; a good thesis and analysis are not. Although both are integral parts of great writing, readers are more likely to focus on the message of the writing than the means of a message.

Following this basic structure is a great option if you are a new tutor feeling anxious about conducting a session, and I highly recommend breaking your sessions down into chunks like I do. However, every tutor has their own style they bring to the Writing Center, so don't feel confined to the method I use. I use it because it works for me, and I'm positive you'll find something you're comfortable with too when tutoring.

Helping Tutees Draw from What They Know

Diego E. Martinez

It is no secret that a tutee is just like you or me when we help them navigate through the work that is before them, as we've been in their same positions before; gauging our options in the writing process of an assignment probably due very soon. And what my experience has brought me is the conclusion that we indeed are able to, and very much should, draw from the knowledge we have amounted from our previous/current classes and put it into practice in the essays we write. This is actually universal for every subject as we continue to integrate what we know to what we say, think, and write.

It's sometimes difficult to think and finally write about a certain topic and subject when all we have are the bare thoughts from the class given to us by our teachers, and when your tutee is clearly struggling to facilitate new ideas in the assignment, it is best to remind them and help them think about other subjects they are already knowledgeable in and subjects in which they are fond of. But why? Why exactly does this matter? I mean, surely we've all written essays in which we pull straight from the source and the prompt and still get a decent grade, so why even bother caring about what AP Euro or Psychology taught us? Well that's the thing, they taught us a lot - now granted, some wheat and some chaff... but nonetheless, a utility lies in the connections we have created along the way once we get to a new writing assignment, and it is imminent in becoming a more integrated writer, and integrated individual, and overall - a more well-reasoned person if we wish to succeed in making use of the challenge before us.

Now, how do even find a way to connect the tutee's knowledge into the actual assignment before them? We can't dig in the recess of their minds and from the abyss find the perfect ores to build the perfect essay, no - You have to ask them about what interests them. It doesn't matter who you have, it really matters who they actually are as a student, and ask them about things that have stood out to them relating to the material they have to write about.

For example, An APLAC student might to pull an anecdote for their argument in an open-ended FRQ without sources, and if so, ask them about their personal experiences and their education - pull from what's relevant to the topic at hand. An English 9 student who is now starting to write more on difficult topics will still have fresh in their mind the things they've learned in their previous middle school classes - so ask them about it to help them formulate an essay to the best of their abilities from what they already know.

When a tutee comes to you with a need for new ideas, remember to gauge what they have already been taught, and what they already know about. The connections we build as we learn throughout the years in our schooling is enough to apply to any subject at hand, especially when one delves into unknown territory. There are archetypes and systems tutees are familiar with, and small reminders and questions can help them remember what they know can help them build a better essay, and at the end of the day - provide them with a new tool in the ever-evolving writing process.

Channeling Your Inner Regina George

Diana Naranjo

Hello new and returning tutors!

If you are new, I am so glad you joined the Writing Center! It's definitely one of the best extracurriculars you could have chosen. The pandemic has changed the Writing Center in many ways, but the comfortable environment we create for our tutees is still consistent! Here are my tips with tutoring all students, but especially those who are introverts:

1. Give them a warm greeting!

As a fellow introvert myself, I can definitely say that people who are kind and actually acknowledge my presence make me feel more comfortable and talkative. It can be as simple as a "Hi!" and introducing yourself, or going even further, and looking at their room decor to see what their interests or hobbies are. Establishing a connection on similar interests can really set up a successful tutorial.

2. Praise then offer suggestions

After the introduction and getting started on the essay, you might see some errors that need fixing. Remember to not tell the tutees what to do, but guide them there. Before pointing out any flaws or "criticizing" (we don't criticize we just offer some suggestions!), again it is important to exude kindness by giving them compliments for their writing. We do not want to discourage them from ever coming to the Writing Center or doubting themselves-- we also don't want the introverts to retreat back into their shells. So remember, sandwich each suggestion with kindness!

3. Confidence or Regina George

Now you may be wondering "where does Regina George fit into this?". Well, the iconic *Mean Girls* character was always so sure of herself and constantly expressed her confidence. Channel your inner Regina George by expressing confidence in yourself as a tutor. Here, we can use a bit of psychology when tutoring introverts. Modeling, and no not Gigi Hadid's career, is where an individual (the tutee) observes the behavior of another person (that's you, the tutor) and begins to imitate that behavior. So essentially, if you are confident, the introverted tutee will want to copy you, and then eventually exude confidence as well-- leading to a successful tutorial where you both collaborate.

These were just a few of my tips, and I hope you enjoy tutoring students as much as I do! And remember to be kind, and channel your inner Regina George- Damian works too because we could all use some fun!

“First Impressions”
Mia Jimenez

Whether you are a new or returning Writing Center tutor, it's likely that you will come across tutees that have never been to the Writing Center before, especially if they're freshmen. Some will be visibly nervous, and while it may be endearing to us to see that they're nervous about something so small, going into a new place where an older student is going to read your writing and give feedback is nerve wracking, and they might walk in expecting the worst. Since they will need to return to the writing center multiple times throughout high school, it's our responsibility to make a good impression on them so they won't hesitate to make their next appointment when the time comes. In every tutorial, we are representing the Writing Center, and there is no better time to show a student how wonderful of a resource it is than the student's very first tutorial. This may seem like a lot of pressure, but don't worry—here's how to make a great first impression on your tutee!

My plan of action always begins with a warm welcome. When you introduce yourself, greet your tutee by their name and ask them how their day is going. If you noticed that you've had their English teacher or done that assignment before, share that and a short anecdote if you'd like. Letting your tutee know that you've been in their situation before will not only show them that you will be considerate when reading their writing, but also show them that you aren't perfect, and that you have gotten to your position by improving yourself over time. This could be an excellent way to build a sense of trust with your tutee and give them a minute to relax before diving into their writing assignment.

Now that the tutee is comfortable and more prepared for feedback, let's talk about the actual tutorial. Since first-time Writing Center tutees are often beginners to more advanced writing assignments, it is helpful to give them genuine compliments on their work and acknowledge places where effort was made to incorporate creative elements such as an imaginative hook. For some, writing creatively comes to them naturally, meanwhile others experience a bit of trial and error. Celebrate their thinking rather than focusing on the execution of their idea before giving advice. It is best to ask tutees questions about their writing and give them a chance to explain their thought process before making suggestions since they are probably more comfortable explaining their thinking out loud than in writing and may already be on the right track. Allowing them to come to their own conclusions and guiding them with questions rather than just telling them what they should do will prevent the tutee from relying on others to give them the right answer and make them feel more accomplished when they realize they had the answer all along--they just needed a push in the right direction.

I advise you to compliment the creative aspects of their writing because they are oftentimes more personal than the more formulaic parts of essays like the thesis and analysis. They build style and give the writer a chance to use their imagination, and receiving praise on a creative element like that will give them the confidence boost they need in such an intimidating situation. So while it's still very important to offer the tutee advice on their arguments and analysis in the assignment, try not to disregard those parts too often. When it's time to end your tutorial, telling the tutee your name and the day you have your Writing Center shift as well as the option to request tutors can also strengthen your relationship with them by letting them come back to you for their next appointment. Knowing they'll see a friendly and helpful tutor at their next appointment will make the experience a lot less stressful.

At the end of the day, you were chosen to be a tutor for a reason, and have everything it takes to be a great one. I know that your tutees are in good hands and I hope these tips are helpful to you. Good luck!

Writing is not easy.
Kailani Fletcher

As writers, we all have had our fair share of uncertainty and embarrassment, especially when we have to *share* our writing. As tutors, we ask tutees to engage in a sharing process that requires a certain level of confidence in order to reach maximum productivity. Maintaining or even building confidence in a vulnerable situation is arguably harder than the writing process itself. Even though everyone *should* aim to feel comfortable enough to share in order to improve, experiencing nervousness about the quality of your writing is totally normal. With this in mind, as tutors we can cultivate an environment that we would feel safe and excited to share our dearest words in. Except, not everyone requires the same level of comfort that we as tutors may need. To put it simply, building a safe place for sharing can be tricky. Suffocating tutees will not help them reach their full potential, but shoving them off a cliff directly into cold commentary will not help either. The process is delicate--similar to the art of testing which porridge is at the best temperature or which bed feels the best to sleep on. An effective tutor can pick up on what the tutee needs to feel more comfortable, so let's break it down.

How do we notice that a student is uncomfortable with their writing? Well, it is not always easy and it takes practice, but there are a couple of signs to look out for. If the tutee uses deprecating language in regard to their writing, shows little interest in the tutorial, apologizes profusely for no good reason, or simply seems apprehensive to have you look over their work, that tutee is probably lacking in amount of confidence necessary to optimize the Writing Center experience. It is our job as tutors to build tutees up in a genuine way. We can do this by highlighting the strengths of a paper, sharing our past experiences with different parts of the writing process, and by simply being friendly. The goal is to bring the tutee out of their shell. Confident tutees will ask critical questions, discuss writing skills, and be interested in the tutorial. This level of engagement is what helps tutees walk away with as much knowledge as they can in thirty minutes.

Now, there is a special case: the clam. A student that comes to a tutorial with their mouth sewn shut and their arms crossed. These types of tutees show little interest and are typically harder to reach with praise. One of my first tutorials started off this way and I was scrambling to get the tutee to engage in their work. I tried everything from small talk to pointing out my favorite parts of their piece. Eventually, I decided to ask them what they liked *least* about the assignment and what annoyed them most about the book that they were writing about. After that, the student opened up and was full of opinions on characters and plot and the prompt itself. The tutee went from nonchalant to impassioned, and was now ready to revise some of the ideas that they had originally written. The tutorial taught me a valuable lesson: passion builds confidence. When none of the options seem right, we can always try whatever it takes to get tutees *excited* to share their ideas. Writing is not easy, tutoring is not always a cake walk either, but passion is human nature--use it.

Meaningful Experiences

Joan Moci

As a Writing Center tutor, it's one of the greatest feelings knowing that you've made a difference in someone's journey as a writer, seeing them come back to the Writing Center having specifically requested you. But unfortunately, it doesn't always happen that way. We've all heard stories from our classmates about how they came to the Writing Center and were left confused, feeling as if they didn't learn anything. While a tutorial is only as good as what a tutee makes of it, it can also be difficult as a tutor to identify and cater to the needs of every student.

It's a fact that students come to the Writing Center at every stage of the writing process with a variety of different needs. Some come with completed essays while others have only an idea of what they want to write about. As a tutor, it can be intimidating dealing with that seemingly perfect essay or helping a student start when they are faced with a new prompt. However, the solution is simple: prioritizing what to work on. By doing so, you'll not only help students improve their writing but gain the skills necessary to become better writers.

When dealing with a student that's just received a new prompt, it's important to focus on what matters most: a thesis. A strong thesis statement directs the entire argument of an essay and provides the foundation for a writer's body paragraphs. Prioritizing it is key to helping your tutee get the most out of their visit. Consider asking them to read their prompt out loud and give a brief summary of their book. This will gently ease them into the tutorial and help them internalize the topic of their essay. If you want, have them brainstorm several possible claims they might use for their thesis and a few pieces of evidence to support each one. If you have any time left over, I would suggest giving them some time to write at their own pace. This will help them get off to a good start and feel confident about their writing knowing that they can ask you any questions that might pop up.

On the other hand, if they've already started writing or completed their first draft, I would suggest focusing on how they answer the prompt. Don't barrage your tutee about grammar or how well their sentences flow together; polishing can come later. What's important is that your tutee knows what's being asked of them and is writing in a way that supports their thesis. Consider asking them to read their writing out loud and any specific areas they might want to work on. If you notice any areas in their writing that aren't as focused, ask them what they were trying to say. Many times students know what they want to write about but struggle to formulate it clearly. If they can express their thoughts out loud, then they can write them down the same way. You might feel tempted to immediately start guiding them, but it's important that tutees write their own thoughts, as that's how they can grow as writers. If a tutee is confused about what they want to write, ask them questions about their prompt and what they wrote in their thesis. This will help them to connect their body paragraphs back to their thesis statement. While this might feel a little painful, what they write will be entirely their own and will greatly aid them in developing their own voice.

And for what might be the most nerve-racking part of being a tutor: dealing with that fully completed essay. Seeing that final draft, you might feel as if you have nothing to say, wondering how you will use the entire 30 minutes. But don't worry, you'll be just fine. Take it slow, one sentence at a time. This is when you should focus on grammar and word choice to help your tutee polish their essay. Ask them to read each sentence in the area they want to work on. Consider asking them how they think their sentence sounds and whether it reflects the tone they wanted. If a sentence sounds awkward or has an unwanted tone, you can ask them about other words they might use. You can even pull up a thesaurus online and look up words together. Maybe ask them ways that they could rephrase their sentences or if they can combine them or split them apart. Before you know it, you'll realize that you put the entire 30 minutes to good use. And more so, you'll realize that you enabled your tutee to turn their essay into a fluid piece of writing that truly expresses their thoughts, entirely on their own.

So you see, next time you are faced with a tutorial and are unsure of what to do, just relax. Greet your tutee to make them feel comfortable, ask them if they want to read their essay out loud and what areas they want to focus on, and then prioritize which parts of the writing process to address first. This will help ensure that your tutee has a meaningful Writing Center experience and has taken steps into becoming a more confident writer.

How a session with a non-native English speaker made tutoring easier

Anisa Chacon

This year as a first-time tutor, I thought I had prepared myself enough to be useful to anyone who came to the writing center looking for help. The only issues I thought to expect were technical ones, as this was the first time using the new website for everyone. Something I didn't expect to struggle with were the greater social barriers that long-term online schooling brought. The difficulty of forming a bond over zoom became just as important as resolving technical glitches when hoping to start up a tutor-tutee relationship. Many times people came in hoping to just get the appointment done so they could get credit for a class. However, there are those instances where you have a student that wants to connect with their work and make you part of that process. This is not only flattering as a tutor but makes you feel useful. One of these connective experiences coincided with a social issue making it a difficult session but having the most return in a tutoring relationship that I have had so far.

This particular day was one of the first appointments I had early on in the school year. I signed in and read the form that the girl had filled out prior to the session. Right away I saw that she was a senior so I felt a little out of my depth. As a junior, I was not sure what I could contribute to a writer that likely had more experience than me. As I entered the online session, I noticed the girl had a strong accent and broken English as we discussed the prompt the teacher had given me. The prompt was relevant to this situation because it was a creative assignment about the girl's family and background. She explained to me specific aspects of her culture like places she would go to and types of songs she had listened to while living in her native country: all things she wanted to incorporate into her writing. I grew a bit discouraged as I could not be the one to translate these into English. I tried to look at it from a different perspective than just translation. We talked more and more about the significance of the details she wanted to add, and things that all people could relate to. The approach of starting the assignment turned into one that I think would address the prompt well: that we are all pretty similar no matter the background.

I did not realize how much time had passed, though in most sessions the 30 minutes appointments go by quickly. I was really glad that we were able to talk about our similarities and that gave her more ideas on how to start her writing. She thanked me for helping her, but I felt more thankful to her for sticking with me when I got lost moving through our conversation. There I was able to put myself in her shoes and realize how hard it would be to go to a tutoring session for a class that may have been difficult for more than one reason. Really, in this instance, I had the easier role.

Overall, I found that as much as you can connect with someone on a personal level, the easier you will find to get through the session. Later on, she booked me as a tutor again. On recognizing her name I was really grateful that she thought me worthwhile and useful to talk to about a writing assignment. This time it went very smoothly as we spent the first couple minutes catching up and even talking about how she had done on the assignment we started together previously. To form this connection with really anyone who comes to a session, just talking about how the school day might have gone or a common teacher that you have both had will really make it evident that you two are peers: both students that have been in the same situations.

In the future, when tutoring, I will feel so much more prepared when encountering other non-native English speakers, or anyone with who I might not think it would be easy to start a conversation. I hope that this can help any of the new tutors who have any anxiety plunging into the water feet first, unsure of how to start in sessions that seem out of their depth. An important thing to remember is that we are all people who have a lot more in common than we think.

War Strategies: A Beginner's Guide to Defeating the Enemy

Catherine Quinones

If you are reading this, then perhaps you are a worthy opponent to face the raging inferno, a brewing storm. Hurry! The enemy is fast approaching and we have limited time to prepare. Luckily, this guide will teach you the fundamentals in facing the severely wicked, freakishly grotesque, and daunting monster out there - ourselves. Perhaps you believe that you were chosen to be next year's tutors by chance or simply pure luck, that your name was drawn out of a hat and completely at random like the lottery. These thoughts where you begin to undermine your intellect and rationalize that you are not cut out for this duty is something everyone faces, regardless of how qualified they appear. Imposter syndrome - feeling as if you are an imposter (shocker!) and fearing that someone will reveal you as undeserving or even unqualified for your position, in this case being a tutor.

Reminiscing upon my own experiences, I remember how I was filled with much doubt regarding my abilities as a writer, intimidated by the caliber and brilliance of my fellow peers. As I continued to plant a seed in my mind, rooting uncertainty and anxiety, I now reflect upon such negativity as lessons paving my success in the Writing Center.

The battle begins by first identifying what you are thinking when taking a look at yourself. Do you feel like you do not belong here? That you are unqualified or undeserving enough to tutor? Whatever it may be, I want you to address this pessimistic attitude even if you are uncomfortable with such feelings. Sometimes, even a managed mind, continues to confront inevitable insecurities and that is okay. Conflicts will arise if you convince yourself that one is not entitled to feel unsure and diffident while entering foreign tutorials. You are not your thoughts, so do not make it such.

Now, after successfully waging a war upon the enemy, our negative thoughts, brainstorm what you wish to believe about yourself and what you hope to achieve at the end of this fight. For example, I declare that I am going to be the most memorable tutor and am fully confident in my phenomenally useful skills. Your power lies in the ways you respond to uncertainty, so take control by emanating light at the end of your journey, something to look forward to.

You made it, the skirmish is just about over, yet there's one more step in this manual that is vital for your success at a tutor. Set one more belief that you can think now, like admiring your ability to show empathy because you can relate to feeling distressed or hopeless when writing a CQT. All of your experiences with essays, literary pieces, and even research papers have prepared you for your journey which now begins. So, embark on this new chapter in your life, one beginning at the front steps of the Writing Center, with an open mindset - learning to love the version of outcome you continue to shape. Keep in mind that with time and patience will you be able to yield certainty and confidence, eluding to your capacity to do such extraordinary things during a tutoring session. I leave on this note that you are skilled and worthy and you are enough despite what we might think of ourselves. Farewell my friend and best of luck! (though you won't need it).

Be the map to their Dora the Explorer, not the kid yelling the answer from home
Emily Joy Salinas

While working as a Writing Center tutor, you will encounter many tutees ranging from different skill levels. With each and every piece, the goal is to guide the student into hitting all points of the prompt and crafting something they are proud of. Now the key word here is *guide*. There is nothing wrong with helping your tutee elevate their writing, but when your role shifts from guide to editor, it's time to turn back.

It is easy to get caught up in revisions and forget that the student is there to improve rather than be corrected. Simply listing what the student has done incorrectly may help them with that piece, but all improvements will be lost the next time they have to open up a new doc and start a new essay. If their citations are incorrect, teach them the common way to cite within a piece. If they struggled to create a thesis, show them how to formulate their ideas by analyzing the prompt and materials. Rather than focusing on only making the writing they brought excellent, work on building them up into an overall strong writer. The skills you introduce to them could be highly beneficial further down the line.

The other situation that pulls a tutor away from being a guide is when you take over the wheel, or what I call, 'the kid yelling the answer from home'. Typically, since you are more experienced academically, your skills as a tutor will exceed that of the tutee. There will be some situations where you could have done the piece better, and it is very tempting to want to change the syntax of that specific sentence or analysis of that quote into a manner that suits your writing style. While this may appear like a helpful act, this ultimately undermines the student's voice and detracts from the writing being their own. It is important to fix what is necessary but refrain from shaking up their paper into something they would never have written. The kid yelling the answer from home will tell the tutee what they need to do, urging their Dora the Explorer to hurry up and go a certain path. But a map will guide their exploring tutee in a way that shapes the appointment into something that may possibly impact their writing permanently.

Tutoring in the Dark **Skyler Sharp**

The best part of being involved in this program is interacting with the different students that come through the writing center. With this year especially, it has become quite hard to interact with people and really get that dose of social interaction that is usually gained during a school year. Fortunately, the writing center gave me that opportunity to see new faces and learn about different people. While I have met so many great faces this year through my computer, I occasionally will join a tutoring session to a blank screen. A black screen under my own face, and a microphone muted. Through this challenge of tutoring online, I've gained a new perspective and experience of how to tutor.

At first looking at the blank screen, I became quite confused on how this was going to work. I spoke and I received no answer, so I waited a moment until I received a chat from the student. Reading that both his microphone and his camera were not working, I replied that we could just use the chat. While the solution was quite simple, it certainly was challenging trying to communicate and interact with a student this way. I was quite used to asking the student to read their paper out loud, go into detail about their assignment, and get to know a little bit about them. Here the student hardly wrote in the chat and seemed so absent from the process all together. It really gave me a perspective of how teachers must be feeling with a class full of black boxes and muted microphones, but with that I knew I should as well look at the students' point of view. There are several times when I do not want to keep my camera on or want to speak out, though it is not very usual, the student could have a reasonable explanation. I continued through his paper trying my best to really get him to communicate with me, but the most he typed was when he wanted me to send the client form to his personal email. Though it was quite frustrating, I knew I just needed to focus on what was in front of me and the tools I had to continue the session.

In the end I was able to successfully complete the tutorial, but I just did not feel very satisfied with the way the whole tutoring session went. I just really felt like I could have been able to help the student out so much more if we were able to communicate the usual way. Though it did help me realize that not every single tutoring session is going to go exactly how I want it and that's okay. Each time I tutor a student I learn something new and improve the way they interact with the tutee. This whole process helped me learn how to interact with students and to help on their paper without verbally communicating with them, it definitely helped bring out my skills that I use when I'm writing a paper. It also helped me realize a bit about how much tutoring is a two way street. The session will of course mainly be directed by you, the tutor, but it really all depends on the student for the impact, will they take it all in and learn from the session? You can only teach and help as much as they want to learn. Realizing that made me feel a little bit better about the session over all. I gave my all to the student, even with his special accommodations, and that is all that should matter.

Butterflies

Andrea Suresh

Butterflies. Nerves. A sensation that floods the body as you react to the idea that now, through the process of filling out an application, teacher recommendations, and an interview, you have become the teacher. The one of two people to hold the knowledge and key to aiding and changing an “OK” paper into a “crisp-A” scoring paper. Tutoring, at first, is centered around the deed that one person teaches another about a subject they may be struggling with, but as you peel the layer of being a “tutor”, you learn that it’s a learning process in itself.

Butterflies. Gorgeous insects that signify this nervous feeling you get in the pit of your stomach; a not so pretty feeling that induces as the thought of holding this power known as knowledge or skill about the art of writing, settles. Although being a tutor paints you to be a student with all the corrections or fixes that will turn a paper from a C to a B+, being a tutor makes you a student or person who is willing to learn, working hand in hand with another. Working to both achieve a common goal; the goal of your tutee leaving your session having gained some skill or reassurance that they are doing a good job; that they, as they write each paper, are only improving and that you, as a tutor have learned how to better communicate and realized that the process of tutoring is not black and white. It’s dimensional, in that all tutors have their ways of engaging with their tutees, and through tutorials, you will find your way. Working to both achieve a common goal, which is for your tutee to leave your session having gained some skill or reassurance that they’re doing a good job. That as they write each paper, they are slowly improving and moving forward and that you, as a tutor, have learned how to better communicate and have realized that the process of tutoring is not black white.

Butterflies. A fervor that storms the mind when thinking of the responsibility that is associated with tutoring. Along with fear, butterflies are a normal sensation almost every tutor experiences when tutoring. Whether it’s the responsibility of facing your timidness, feeling nervous is not foreign to a new incoming tutor. With tutorials and gaining experience, you begin to build a routine. A routine for how you go about tutoring your tutee. Whether that be, asking questions about themselves and how they’re doing or how they’re feeling about their assignment, those nerves that flood in are human, and should be used to motivate you. It’s important that you understand that as nervous as you are about your ability to help your tutee, they are to show you what they’ve written. Writing is personal and the way words are phrased can describe a lot about a person, which is a beautiful thing; as beautiful as butterflies.