

# Bristol Tutors



# TUTORING TIPS

If you are new to tutoring or have been delivering tuition for many years we hope some of the helpful tips and principles below can enable you to be the best possible tutor for your students!

There is no one-size-fits-all approach and each tutor must discern the best way to plan and deliver the tuition to meet the desired outcomes but below are some helpful prompts to aid you in supporting your students as best as possible.



## 02

### Tutoring tips part one

#### 1. Getting started

Once a referral has been it is generally helpful to be asking questions so you are really clear on what is needed from you as a tutor. The following is a helpful list of prompt questions you might consider;

- a) What, if any, is the goal of assessment being worked towards and when will any relevant assessments or exams be taking place?
- b) What is the exam board and entry tier
- c) Are there any specific learning difficulties you need to know about?
- d) What is the learner hoping to achieve from tutoring?

Once you know the answer to these questions you can then look up the specific criteria for the exam or assessment being worked towards so you know what the objective is for your student. It is useful to look not only at the course specifications but also sample past papers and mark schemes so you can understand what the examiner will be looking for and be able to communicate this to the learner in the lessons.

If the learner is not working towards a specific assessment, generally you would still need to gain clarity on any relevant curriculum information to make sure what you are covering complements what they are learning in class and you can make the best decisions about what their objective is and how to deliver the tuition.

## 03

### 2. The first tutorial and initial assessment

Ahead of the first tutoring session, it is helpful to make sure you are as clear as possible on the answers to point one so you know what your (and your student's) objective is. This will enable you to choose and bring resources that are relevant and helpful.

During the first tutorial it can be helpful to carry out some form of initial assessment. This is to help you to understand better what the student's strengths and weaknesses are and how to best help them and approach the tutoring.

This assessment will likely look very different depending on the learner's age, subject and ability – especially taking into account whether they have any anxiety about learning or if there are any specific learning difficulties of which to be mindful.

Here are some examples of how an informal initial assessment could be carried out:

a)The Traffic lighting topic system;

With this method you would bring the course specifications with you or have them handy on your laptop or in a relevant revision guide. You'd then go over the topics one by one and ask the student to mark them by colour: red if they haven't covered it yet, amber for if they don't feel confident but have covered it in class, green for if they feel confident with the topic. This gives a good, fast overview of where they are up to in their course and you can get to work on helping them with the amber topics.

b)For a humanities subject, you may also wish to carry out an exercise that tests key skills – for example English GCSE language student may benefit from you going over a past paper question together in the first lesson in a relaxed manner so you can see how they approach this. Do they understand the question? Do they plan before write etc?What is their pace and timing like?Are they doing what is required by the examiner by giving evidence from the text to back up their points?

## 04

a) For younger learners, a fun exercise can be really good – again, something to test their key skills but keeping it fun and light hearted and not mentioning verbally that you are testing them. You might wish to make notes after the tutorial on how they managed and where their areas of strength and weaknesses are so you can start to plan ahead how best to help them move forwards and achieve their objective.

b) Ask questions! Whatever the age of the learner, it is generally a good principle for tutors to be asking learners directly what they find hard, easy, scary etc so you can make a note of this and help this to inform and direct your approach. They may already have a clear idea of what they need help with and this too will help guide your approach. You can also ask questions about whether they are happy to be given homework from tutoring and how involved their parents wish to be in the tutoring process.

### **3. Setting goals/scheme of work**

Once the student's abilities have been assessed (however informally) and tutors have got a clear idea of where the learner most needs help, a next obvious step would be to set some goals and break things down. This is so you can plan ahead how to achieve the set objective and best help the student in achieving this.

Knowing in detail the assessment they are working towards generally helps this process as you can create a road map to work towards that assessment, setting out next steps but also having the bigger picture in mind to ensure you are covering things in a timely manner and in keeping with any of the student's pending assessments. There is no one-size-fits-all approach and each tutor must discern the best way to plan and deliver the tuition to meet the desired outcomes.

## 05

### 4. Ongoing assessment

Once tuition is underway, it is handy to keep 'checking in' to ensure that the learner is improving and growing in confidence and ability and that your tutoring is having a positive impact. Ongoing assessments can be helpful for you to make an informed judgment on this. These assessments will likely look very different with each learner and, again, it is up to you to discern what is best and most appropriate. If the student is working towards an exam that is close-by, doing regular past paper questions could be a great way to see how well they are improving. Being specific and inviting them to mark their own work using mark schemes is a good principle as it helps them to understand that they need to hit specific targets in order to achieve any desired grades.

Ongoing assessment can also be much more informal – for example, returning to an earlier exercise or topic and doing a recap to see how much they have retained. Whatever you deem to be the best approach with a given student, the key principle is that assessing as you go helps to ensure that tutoring is having a positive impact and that the learner is moving towards their goal.

### 5. Keeping a log

If you are carrying out a school referral you will need to keep a student progress record to have a record of what you have covered in each tutorial and how well the student has engaged with your tutoring.

However, even in a private referral setting it is often useful to keep your own notes to make sure there is clarity about what has been covered over a period of time and how well the student is doing. These logs serve as a reference point for you as a tutor to check that you are on track with any goals and timeframes you have set at the beginning and are also useful to share, where appropriate with parents, carers or teachers so they can see how well the tutoring is going and what you are covering in each session.

## 06

### Tutoring Tips part two

#### Tutoring online

Online tutoring can be really beneficial but it is slightly different in nature. A few things for you to consider:

1.You will need to ensure you ask for any relevant safeguarding policies and procedures from schools and also refer to the Bristol Tutors online safeguarding procedures.

2.It is useful to ask ahead of time what platform will be used so you can take time to familiarize yourself with how it works.Especially consider things like how to ensure you can navigate efficiently things such as how to;

- Tutor multiple students at once
- Upload/refer to resources during the lesson
- Be clear and punctual on the timing of tutorials

3.Practice preparation – if you are fairly new to tutoring online and the system being used permits, it can be useful to carry out a trial tutorial with a friend or family member to ensure your computer is set up properly (ie webcam and microphone settings) and you know how to navigate everything ahead of starting tuition properly.

4.It's not that different! The general approach is largely the same in principle – so gaging the student's abilities, then deciding how best to deliver the tuition and keeping track as you go.

## 07

### **Tutoring small groups**

Small group tutoring can be very effective but there are a few things to take into account that would not be so relevant with one to one tuition.

1. When you carry out initial assessments or ask questions you may find that your students are at different levels so as a principle planning ideally includes exercises or material that can account for this to ensure that learners who have more difficulty can keep up but those who may be slightly more confident have something to do if they have completed a task earlier than the others.

2. Each learner will probably have different learning styles so it is good to pinpoint what these are at the outset and bring variety to the small group tuition to try to ensure each learner can access the tuition as best as possible.

3. It is important to try to make sure that no one student dominates the session – so there are more timid students it is important to make time and space for them to input and ask questions.

4. Taking the lead – with one to one tutoring it can be more intuitive to find and set a comfortable pace as there is only one student to consider. However, in a small group setting there is likely to be more impetus on the tutor to actively lead and guide the students through the materials rather than wait for them to direct the sessions in a way that they find more intuitive. This can be a challenge but once tutorials are underway you can make notes about what went well, especially well with that particular group dynamic, and try to tailor future sessions accordingly to help you decide how best to deliver the tuition.

## 08

### **Communicating with schools**

- 1.The first and most important thing to be thinking about at the outset is who you should actually be communicating with! Asking questions to gain clarity on this is advisable as there will likely be a specific person at the school who you would need to liaise with.
- 2.Once you have this information you can also enquire as to how they would like to be in communication with you ie how often and in what form. It is likely you will be asked to share written copies of what you have covered in you tutorials (a student progress record) so the teachers can see how the student is progressing.
- 3.If you have any concerns about the tutoring, the school contact will be the first person to speak with; you will also need to keep Bristol tutors informed if any concerns arise.

### **Providing feedback to pupils on their progress**

Each and every student is unique and there is no one size fits all approach to this.

Some general principles listed below can help you to navigate the best approach;

- 1.If the student is anxious or is an SEND learner (which means they have specific learning difficulties such as ASD, dyslexia or dyspraxia) you will likely first need to ascertain from the school/parent whether it is best to give feedback directly at all or rather to discuss their progress first with the relevant staff member, carer or parent.
- 2.As a general rule it is a good idea to keep feedback really positive – pointing to things that they can now do that they couldn't do before, being intentional about praising them on each and every step forward and achievement.

**09**

3. Where there are areas that still need work, it is useful to have a constructive yet positive approach to this – so for example you might start by making a note of how they are progressing and in which ways and then discuss openly where you feel you have more work to do together and whether they agree with this. You could also use this as a chance to check in and ask how confident they feel about the specific areas or topics and if they feel there is anything you could be doing differently to help them. Approaching this as a two way conversation can make the process less intimidating for the learner and give you a chance to reflect on your own tutoring style too and how you can perhaps reflect and adjust your chosen approach.

**Please be sure to save this document for future reference**