Tutor’s Creed

As tutors, we are responsible for improving the skills of our peers.

As tutors, we will consider the body of work presented at the session in the following manner:
• First, we will impart to students the importance of their role in the learning process including their (and our) physical and mental presence throughout the session.
• Second, we will focus on the students’ understanding of concepts rather than solving particular problems.
• Third, after developing conceptual understanding, we will turn to specific applications.

Our tutors do NOT complete an assignment for a student. Rather, we help students by discussing and guiding them to understanding and comprehension. Often, this is not an easy process. Giving answers (however tempting) helps no one improve their knowledge or skills.

If you do not know the answer to a student’s question, do not try and pretend that you do. The tutoring session is not a place to display your intelligence. Students care very little about how smart you are; they care about how much smarter you can make them.

Common Misconceptions About Tutoring
• Tutors need to know the answers to any and all questions students ask.
• Even if they eventually discuss larger issues, tutors should always begin by pointing out specific errors.
• A good tutor should be doing most of the work in a session.
• A tutor who is just sitting there asking questions isn’t providing much help.
• The tutor must always be in control of what happens during a session.
• Tutors are lecturers, there to tell students what they don’t know.
• A good tutor corrects every error made by a student.
• The job of the tutor is to point out mistakes in student work.
• The primary task of a tutor is to evaluate the content knowledge and skills of a student.

Roles & Responsibilities of ASO Tutors
• Attend and fully participate in tutor training and regular staff meetings.
• Inform the program coordinator and instructor of difficulties that students are having with the course material.
• Regularly check email for updates about study groups and promptly respond to email messages from the program coordinator and instructor.
• Show up to assigned study group sessions on time and well prepared.
• Notify the students in the study group and the program coordinator prior to the session start time if you are unable to attend and need to reschedule.
• Notify the program coordinator and remind the students of any planned schedule changes.
• Regularly communicate with the program coordinator and instructor about how the study groups are going.
• Take and turn in accurate attendance for each of the sessions.
• Facilitate active learning in study groups (i.e. ask for volunteers, assign students to respond to questions, direct students to the board for problem-based questions, rephrase or break down difficult or complex questions, etc.).
• Treat the students in the study group, fellow tutors, program coordinator, and instructor with courtesy and respect.
• Understand that a tutor may not know all the answers, nor is she/he expected to. Refer the student to written resources, the instructor, or TA in cases where a question cannot be answered in the session.

Creating a Positive Atmosphere
One thing that is important for a positive tutoring experience for the student is the environment in which it occurs. Things that tutors can do to create a positive atmosphere:
• Be friendly, make small talk.
• Don't talk down to students.
• Use your knowledge of faculty and courses.
• Build student confidence.
• Use your intelligence wisely; don't show off.
• Take your time.
• Let students talk.
• Explain problems in simple terms.

Expectations for Study Groups

At the First Session
• Sit down with the group and introduce yourself.
• Let the students know why you decided to become a tutor.
• Generate ground rules for the group (as a group).
• Remind the students that your job is to act as a facilitator, not a teacher. You will reinforce this idea non-verbally, by not standing at the board, only getting up as necessary.
• Remind the students that, because this is a group effort, everyone is responsible for keeping the study group on task, not just you.

At the Beginning of the Session
• Share the agenda with the students, if known. Write it up on the board.
• Ask the students which concepts or questions they would like to emphasize.

During the Session
• Be a member of the group. Do not present yourself as an instructor or expert.
• Do not be afraid to say “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure, let’s look that up.”
• Stay on task and remind students to do so, but allow for flexibility.
• If you can’t explain something so that it is understandable to a student, then invite someone else to try.
• Refer students to the instructor and/or TA for additional support.

At the End of the Session
• Find out if any students have other questions that need to be addressed.
• Tell the students what the plan is for the next session.
  o The next set of topics, if known.
  o Getting ready for an exam (1-2 weeks in advance).
    ▪ If you have a review sheet, divide it amongst the participants.
    ▪ If you don’t have a review sheet, divide up the material and have each person design a few plausible test questions for that material to share next week.

Sample Study Group Outline

4:55-5:00 PM
• Arrange room to facilitate group learning (desks in a U shape, roundtable, etc.)
• Write agenda on board, if known.

5:00-5:10 PM
• Greet incoming students.
• Have them sign attendance log.
• Ask for input from students on anything they would like to emphasize.
• Remind study group of your role as facilitator (not teacher) and that the study group requires active participation from all students in order to be productive.

5:10 PM
• Solicit questions from the students and initiate activities, when necessary.
• Find ways to get everyone involved:
  o ask for volunteers
  o assign students to respond to questions
  o direct students to the board for problem-based questions
  o rephrase or break down difficult or complex questions

5:50 PM
• Ask students to summarize what they learned in group and what questions they still have.
• Make arrangements to get answers to questions that came up during session that were not answered.

6:00 PM
• Check in with students to find out if session was helpful.
• Explain what the topics/activities will be for the next study group.
• Solicit suggestions for the next study group.
**Group Facilitation**

Activity: Create a list of techniques that could be used to encourage interaction from members of your groups. Use your own knowledge and experiences, as well as techniques discussed in the pre-training readings (copies can be found in the back of your binder). Use the space below to record responses from all tutors.

Techniques for Encouraging Interaction:
Discussion: We have already touched on some ways to create a *positive* and *interactive* atmosphere, but what other issues must you consider in order to facilitate student learning? How can you help to create a *safe* and *inclusive* learning environment? How can you demonstrate sensitivity to diversity within the group (ethnic, socioeconomic, language, academic background, etc.)? Use the space below to record highlights from this conversation.

Creating a *Safe* and *Inclusive* Learning Environment:
Activity: Partner with one of your fellow tutors. Each pair will be assigned a set of potential problems you may face. For each problem you and your partner must identify indicators/signs that a problem exists, potential causes of that problem, and possible solutions or tips for coping with that problem. First use your own knowledge and experiences, then refer to the handouts provided. Use the spaces below and on the following pages to record responses from all tutors.

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Study Group Activities (Quick Reference)
- Practice working homework problems on the board.
- Have students test each other by asking questions.
- Have students practice teaching each other.
- Have students compare lecture notes.
- Practice drawing diagrams and making charts.
- Brainstorm test questions.
- Summarize assigned readings and report to other members.
- Create summaries/outlines for different chapters for exam review.
- Use study guides, end of chapter questions, terms, handouts, etc.

Study Group Activities (Detailed)
Group members pair off and compare their homework answers. They generate a list of the homework problems they’re not sure about and write the question number up on the board. The entire group discusses the homework problems. The tutors can keep track of the hard problems, collate the problems, and redistribute them as an exam review.

Each group member identifies up to three things in their lecture notes or assigned reading that they do not understand or which need clarification. Those are written on the board. The group then organizes them either by topic or by importance and tries to clarify them as a group. The tutors can keep track of the hardest concepts, collate, and redistribute to the students for an exam review.

Group members choose or are each assigned a day’s worth of lecture notes. They individually make lists of the most important concepts. The students then work with one or two others, who worked with the same day’s worth of material, refine their lists and then write their list on the board for the rest of the group. These lists can be used to generate a review sheet for the material.

Group members pair off and review/compare their lecture notes from the past week. They then make a list of three or four of the most important concepts and attempt to summarize them in their own words. These lists can later be used to help generate a review sheet.

Before the group meets, the students make lists of terms/concepts based upon their notes. These are just words or short phrases, not entire sentences. For group study, the tutors write these on the board and have each group member take turns explaining the terms of concepts to the rest of the group. This list can be used to help figure out what is most important and what is less important in the material.
For concepts that can be compared and contrasted, each group member (alone or in small groups) reviews notes and makes a list of major topics for the material covered (see other methods for doing this above). Note any relationships among the topics—these are often good material for essay questions. Then the study group creates a chart by placing the major topics in the left column. In the header row, they either break down the major topics into analytical categories or provide applications, definitions, and examples.

For articles or non-textbook reading, group members can pair off to generate summaries of the assigned readings and report to other members. The summaries should describe what was most important, not simply restate what was read.

Group members brainstorm and try to predict test questions each week. Tutors keep a running list for each chapter or lecture so that he/she can do a complete review before each test and the final exam.

Create your own exam review sheet. Tutors divide the material among the group members and have them use the homework, notes, and/or readings to figure out what is most important (What should I be able to do? What should I be able to explain?) and report it to the rest of the group. This can be done at the end of the session to share at the beginning of the next study group.

Use old or sample tests (approved by the instructor) for additional practice problems. Assign each group member or pair problems and give them time to work on them. Then, each group member or pair presents their answer to the group.

Create your own practice test. In the study groups taking place two weeks before a test, assign a chapter or lecture to each individual in the group. Each individual looks through his/her notes to devise at least five challenging test questions for the next study group (the week of or before the exam). Ideally, the questions would resemble the types of questions (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, essay, etc.) and represent the range of question levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, etc.) you might encounter on the real test, so this may work best for the second exam. Each individual shares his/her questions with the group so everyone takes away a full set of questions. If time allows, you can start tackling the questions, preferably without the use of their notes to simulate the real test situation.

After a test or quiz has been returned, the group makes a list of difficult questions to analyze (where did you go wrong, why is the question difficult?) and plans a strategy for the next test.

Group members take turns drawing or explaining diagrams from the notes/reading. The diagrams can be assigned or the tutor can write the number or page number for each diagram on a scrap of paper, allowing each group member to choose randomly.
Each group member draws a picture of a scenario or a process on the board without the help of their notes. Then have the group members switch places with each other and either label the drawing or write out the steps to the process in words, again without their notes.

Before the group meets, the tutor identifies and studies complex or detailed processes, diagrams, figures, etc. that appear in their materials. During the study group, the students review all of the applicable notes and the tutor assigns each group member an item to draw and explain without the help of their notes. Then the group members use their notes to correct, refine, or add to the drawings or explanations.

Types of Questions

Testing Questions – elicit specific information, check for content understanding

- How do you predict that would work in...?
- What qualities do these two things have in common?
- How does this connect with...
- Which do you think is best?

Clarifying Questions – elicit clarification, check for understanding of others; also used to probe for inconsistencies or errors

- Can you rephrase that?
- What did you mean by...
- Can you give an example?

Elaborating Questions – encourage expression of thoughts and feelings

- Can you tell me more about that?
- Uh-huh, what else?
- How do you feel about...?
Effective Questioning in Study Groups

Ask questions of clarification concerning complex concepts/theories to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Start with this type of question concerning the recently covered material to get a feel of what level the group is at. Figure out where the difficult content lies.

Ask questions at varying cognitive levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, etc.) so students get practice in thinking about the material in different ways.

Ask probing questions (why, how) which ask students to deepen their ideas, provide justifications for conclusions, or articulate assumptions.

Ask open-ended questions for multiple ideas or answers before attempting any evaluation or selection among them. Carefully consider the alternative views.

Ask questions to define concepts by their own experience.

Ask questions involving direct comparison and contrast that require students to develop bridging concepts or dimensions.

Ask questions by analogy, simile, or other indirect comparison. Stimulate new concepts by asking for comparisons among apparently unrelated elements. Use unique examples.

Ask questions about the question allowing students to come up with their own questions. Come up with different ways to rephrase the same question. Break large questions down into smaller ones.

Ask questions to summarize or generalize the main points when completing a topic area before moving on to the next topic.

Ask deductive questions requiring implications or extensions of concepts and theories.

Ask connective questions relating past material to present material and future material.

Ask students to question what they have seen and heard.

Guide someone to the answer by asking a series of smaller leading questions.

Write down the questions asked in the session and post them or email them out.
Questioning Skills to Try in your Study Group

“Try to” List

1. **Try to pause for 5 seconds after asking a question.** Now everyone can think carefully and gain confidence before responding!

2. **Try to ask open-ended questions rather than those that require a yes or no answer.** This requires students to explain *how* and *why*, and you may open a lively discussion.

3. **Try to avoid answering your own questions.** Otherwise students will learn to wait until you give them the answer.

4. **Try to follow up responses with the question “Why?”** This will help the student who could not answer the initial question to understand how the answer was reached!

5. **Try to limit the use of questions which rely almost completely on memory.** The goal is to learn at higher cognitive levels beyond memorization. These questions might be good for a quick warm-up at the beginning of the session.

6. **Try to follow up a response by fielding it to the rest of the group.** This allows for multiple perspectives or opinions on a solution.

7. **Try to avoid giveaway facial expressions to responses.** Showing negative reactions discourages future response.

8. **Try to avoid asking questions that contain the answer.** Examples include “Now, you will have to __________, won’t you?” “This is a ________, isn’t it?”

9. **Try to avoid calling on only one particular person.** All students except the one you called on will turn off their brains and wait for the answer. Ask more than one person for the answer.

10. **Try to avoid labeling the degree of difficulty in a question.** “This is an easy one...” The responder will not feel any worth for answering correctly because it was easy, and conversely the responder will feel even worse if answered incorrectly!

11. **Try to call upon students who are quiet/reluctant to participate.** This goes along with being inclusive of everyone’s opinions and perspectives.

12. **Try to refer to previous student responses.** This requires students to compare, justify, and question each other’s responses to their own.

13. **Try to call on students randomly when everyone is willingly participating.** This guards against favoritism and keeps students on their toes for when they will be called on next.