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Part 1: Welcome to the Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center

Welcome, tutors!
Congratulations and welcome! We are delighted that you've accepted a leadership position as a tutor at the University of Saint Mary’s Keleher Learning Commons. Peer tutoring is a core component of student success at USM and we’re so happy to have you as part of the team. 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 and integral resource. We currently provide opportunities for students to seek assistance in nearly every subject area, and we have YOU to thank for making that possible!

A faculty member has recommended you because he/she sees you as someone with the background, communication skills, patience, and solid academic standing to take on this responsibility. Your role is an important one. Please use this handbook as a guide and resource as you not only help students realize their potentials, but also as you realize yours. Again, thank you, and welcome aboard!

Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center Mission & Vision
The Keleher Learning Commons challenges and empowers students to maximize their academic potential by offering opportunities to work individually and collaboratively, learn from peers and experts, discover and explore resources, technology, and ideas, and create and experiment. The Keleher Learning Commons provides an inviting supportive environment for learning, engaging with history, life and career planning, and community involvement.

Further, the Tutoring and Writing Center’s mission is to empower USM students to be strategic learners by providing student-centered academic support through peer-to-peer and small group collaboration with a program that’s designed by students for students.

Aligning with the University of Saint Mary values of Excellence and Community the Peer Tutoring Program seeks to maximize academic potential and promote student success and retention in a safe and welcoming environment.

Rationale
- Many students tend to feel more comfortable asking questions in small groups rather than large classes.
- Peer tutors have often experienced the same difficulties and can help students through the learning process.
- Students meet with the same peer tutor throughout the semester, which provides continuity and consistency to the assistance given.
- Tutors help students develop and improve their study skills and learning strategies, as well as their self-confidence with the course material.
- Provides professional development for Peer Tutors as student employees.
Overview of Services

One-on-One Tutoring (By Appointment)
One-on-one tutoring appointments are individual tutoring sessions that must be scheduled in advance (by 9PM the night before) via LibCal. Each student may schedule a maximum of 2 one-on-one tutoring appointments per week per course, or per writing assignment. One-on-one tutoring sessions should be 30 minutes in duration.

Study Groups (Small Group Tutoring)
Small group tutoring occurs when a tutor leads a single session with a group of 3-5 students. Students must be enrolled in the same course with the same instructor and must need assistance with the same material. Generally, students schedule a group tutoring session together. However, individual students could schedule a group session with the understanding that other students from the same course may be added to it.
Small group tutoring is based on collaborative learning principles where all members, guided by a tutor, are responsible for sharing their knowledge. Group tutoring sessions are 45-60 minutes long.

Walk-ins
Walk-in services are one-on-one or small group tutoring sessions in various subjects. Walk-ins are offered in the Keleher Learning Commons where tutors are available at specific days/times during each academic semester. The students who seek tutoring assistance are served on a first-come-first-served basis. Walk-in tutoring sessions may last for 30 minutes.

Referrals
During tutoring sessions, students may present information or exhibit behavior indicating that they may be facing personal problems that seem to be consistently interfering with learning. In such cases, the tutors should not attempt to solve the problem, but rather refer the student to the appropriate office or service at the university.
The tutors are familiar with the range of professional services available at the University of Saint Mary, and will refer the student to the appropriate office for assistance.

Etiquette and Ethics

Peer Tutoring Code of Ethics
(adapted from Monmouth University’s Tutoring and Writing Services Handbook)

1. I understand that my role as a tutor is to enable students to do their own work using the best learning approach possible.
2. I will never guess at or appropriate a grade for a student’s work. I understand that evaluative comments are reserved for the instructor alone.
3. I will provide honest feedback in the form of positive praise and/or constructive suggestions to the students I serve in a manner that will be beneficial to their overall learning.
4. I will demonstrate faith in my student’s learning abilities.
5. I understand that my relationship to the student is purely professional and not personal.
6. I will show respect for my students’ cultural background and personal value system.
7. I recognize that I do not have all the answers to student questions. In this event, I will seek assistance in finding answers to the student’s questions and/or direct the student to an appropriate resource for the information.
8. I will maintain accurate records of tutoring sessions as expected and required.
9. I will respect my students’ personal dignity at all times.
10. I will be on time for tutoring appointments, not only out of courtesy, but to be a good example for my students to follow.
11. I will keep information about the students to whom I am assigned confidential.
12. I understand that my ultimate goal is to assist students in discovering how they learn best and to help my students develop the skills to achieve their best educational outcomes.
13. I will share any concerns I have with my supervisor. I expect to learn along with my student.
14. I will keep current in my subject area(s), learning methodologies, and tutor training.
15. I will remain flexible to my approach to student learning and be respectful various learning styles and preferences.
16. I will share techniques for improved study skills with my students.

**Purpose and Audience of Peer Tutoring**

The overall purpose of the peer-tutoring model is to provide assistance and a vehicle to understanding in a non-threatening environment. Students often seek out peer tutors because they feel more comfortable speaking with someone who is perceived as less authoritative than an instructor. In doing so, they are able to relax and work through the difficulties they have in order to gain a better understanding of the material or task at hand.

As a tutor, your audience is not only your tutee, but also yourself. You, too, should work towards mastering the content you are providing assistance with, while also gaining a deeper understanding for yourself. Tutoring will, in turn, make you a better student and communicator (immediately), as well as a proficient life-long learner.
Bloom’s Taxonomy

As tutors, we endeavor to not just teach our tutees how to be successful on one, specific assignment, but how to use “deep learning strategies [to] foster the development of cognition” (Bloom’s Taxonomy 1956). The chart below illustrates the levels of understanding relative to the types of learning experienced. Strive for deeper learning at the highest level at the outset of each session and watch your tutees improve in all areas of their education!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Level</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Cognitive Order: Novice → Expert</th>
<th>Type of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Rote memorization to aid in the identification and retrieval of information</td>
<td>Low – Novice</td>
<td>Surface / Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interpret, classify, summarize, explain, or compare/contrast memorized information</td>
<td>Low – Novice</td>
<td>Surface / Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
<td>Ability to execute or implement knowledge to a new scenario</td>
<td>Intermediate – Novice</td>
<td>Deeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Ability to differentiate, find coherence, or attribute information</td>
<td>Intermediate – Expert</td>
<td>Deeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Ability to critically analyze information</td>
<td>High – Expert</td>
<td>Deeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis</strong></td>
<td>Ability to critically analyze information to generate new ideas and hypotheses</td>
<td>High – Expert</td>
<td>Deeper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer Tutor Job Description, Responsibilities, Qualifications, and Skills

Job Description and Responsibilities:

- Assists students with reading comprehension, math, writing, research skills, and/or concepts key to the field in which the student-employee tutors (English, math, science, theology, history, drawing, etc.)
- Participates in tutor training sessions offered by the Office of Learning and Success Services (OLSS)
- Adheres to OLSS Code of Ethics
- Maintains accurate records of all tutoring sessions
- Complies with deadlines for items such as time cards
- Completes new-hire orientation
- Performs additional duties as assigned

Qualifications and Skills:

- Recommendation of USM faculty member
- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior standing (Freshmen may be considered on a case by case basis)
- Minimum 2.75 GPA
- An A or B in each of the courses tutored OR demonstrated knowledge of the subject e.g., Student has not taken Pre-calculus because they started their first college semester in Calculus I, but they can tutor Pre-calculus
- Abides by guidelines regarding student confidentiality
- Team player with strong communication skills
- Willingness to explain the same material in different ways with patience and understand that everyone learns differently
- Maintain an understanding that failure does not define anyone’s identity
- Ability to manage tutoring schedules and reporting procedures

Resources

It’s okay if you don’t know everything; in fact, that’s expected! You should stand to gain as much knowledge from the session as your tutees. Sometimes the most effective session includes searching for and navigating resources together. Be sure to check out these resources to help point you in the right direction:

- University of Saint Mary LibGuides: [https://stmary.libguides.com/?b=](https://stmary.libguides.com/?b=)
- Purdue Online Writing Lab: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)
Tutor Kits
Before you begin your session, ensure that you have a tutor kit on your table. Each kit contains:

- Scratch paper
- Pen
- Pencil
- Post-It Notes
- Two (different colored) highlighters

Part 2: Learning Styles, Body Language, and Cultural Sensitivity

Learning Styles
Understanding your tutees’ 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,
- don’t play with pens,
- don’t put your hands over your mouth
- try and control your facial expressions
- relax your brow

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 miscommunicated cultural cues are interfering with your tutoring sessions, try addressing the issue directly by approaching the topic with curiosity and openness.

NEVER use red pen during your sessions. Some cultures consider red as a harsh or corrective color. You are not there to correct students’ work, but to help them correct it on their own.

(Section adapted from Reed University’s Academic Support Tutor Handbook)

Tutoring Students with Short Attention Spans
As the Peer Tutor, be a facilitator:

• Ask the student how s/he learns best. (What strategies has s/he developed to help maintain focus, attention, interest, and ability to memorize details? Ask students to describe a typical study period and what happens when they lose focus.)
• Remember that emotions are an important part of learning—ask students what makes them frustrated and what they would most like to “master,” and work on these things. Emphasize their progress to help them gain confidence and monitor themselves.
• Help students break assignments and projects into small manageable parts. This helps them to feel less overwhelmed (which can lead to avoidance—often called procrastination).
• Set clear limits for each session and provide a clear structure (“first we’ll work on this, then we’ll do this, and finally, we’ll review what we’ve done—how does that sound?”). Then stick to that structure unless the student asks to work on something else. Repeat directions and remind the student of the structure you have agreed on (“okay, so we’ve reviewed the assignment, now we’re going to discuss some strategies for free writing...”).
• If the student’s attention wanders, change your focus, or make a joke. Humor is a great asset, but maintain a balance between being strict and relaxed. If the student has clearly lost focus, ask him or her to review what you have done so far. Then restate the structure of the session and move along with it. The more you notice whether students are paying attention, the more connected they will feel and the less their attention will wander (the same applies to yawning).
• Common Areas of Difficulty
  • Organization & planning
  • Preparation
  • Memory
  • Concentration
• “Illogical” rules (try to explain why as well as what)
• Self-confidence
• Frustration
• Self-observation
• Evaluation

(adapted from Austin College’s Peer Tutor Handbook)

Part 3: The Tutoring Session

Anatomy of a Session
Sessions in the Tutoring and Writing Center are 30-minutes long. When a student sits down, take the first few moments to introduce yourselves to each other, and establish the student’s goal for the session. Politely let the student know what the time limit is and adhere to it. Even if there are no other students waiting, it’s important to maintain the session’s timed structure for your benefit and theirs.

Getting started (5 minutes):

• Introduce yourselves to each other and establish rapport
• Set realistic goal(s) for the session, understanding the time constraint
• Have the student uncover the assignment’s directives and any work (s)he has in tow
• Locate any materials/aides you’ll need to conduct your session (i.e., white board, pencil, paper, etc.)

Work time (about 20 minutes):

• Work on as much as you can, modeling all the way so that the student can take his/her new knowledge away from the session and implement it as (s)he continues to complete the assignment
• Use the Socratic Method to gauge the student’s understanding and help facilitate learning
• Make notes of progress or areas to work on for next time

Wrapping up (5 minutes):

• Review what you’ve accomplished and assess the student’s understanding
• Make a plan for next session
• Ensure the student has all notes and materials worked on during the session
• Explain the citation requirement of the session (if needed)
• Thank the student for using the service
• Ask the student to offer any feedback using the appropriate channels
Part 4: Best Practices and Policies for Tutoring Writing in the Keleher Learning Commons

The Socratic Method
An ancient proverb says, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for that day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life.” That philosophy is incorporated into the tutoring program at the Academic Skills Center and is especially appropriate when helping students with all stages of a writing assignment. We feel that learning to write well will be a helpful skill for students throughout their lives.

While tutoring in the area of writing, the Socratic Method – which encourages asking questions of students to help them discover corrections needed rather than have the tutor make corrections – is preferred. When the student makes and understands the changes s/he is making in a paper, learning that can be reapplied is occurring. The goal of tutoring is to foster student independence following the principle that tutors can help students help themselves by stimulating active learning and building students’ confidence in their own abilities. Throughout all stages of the writing process, tutors use diagnosis and the Socratic Method to find students’ levels of comprehension before moving to new concepts.

Writing is a cyclical process, not linear. Through discovery and analysis the student can readjust her/his paper during all stages of writing. Tutors encourage students by first helping them identify their strengths and using these to overcome weaknesses. Hopefully, students can then make necessary changes or revisions while developing the confidence to become independent writers.

(adapted from Austin College’s Peer Tutor Handbook)

Markings
Do NOT mark directly on students’ papers, especially in red pen. Try to use scratch paper whenever you can, or the back of the paper to model rules. The student should do any and all marking directly on his/her text.

Consider having the student use a highlighter to locate a thesis or other organizational elements. This is a great tool for visualization and can help with outlining and maintaining proper structure.

Policies
In order for students to get the most out of their sessions and to ensure that they’re able to do their own work independent of tutoring, here are the policies for writing help sessions:

- No more than two sessions on any one assignment – it’s best to use this “two-session limit” like bookends to the writing process. Use the first as a brainstorming session, and the second to go over a completed draft prior to the student’s submission of the work
- Do not review writing on the day that it is due. Doing so places a high probability on having a stressful session and on plagiarism. Prohibiting students from doing this will also teach them proper time management skills.
Procedure for Conferencing About Writing
Always start with the assignment sheet. Ask the student to furnish the assignment’s directives and work through what the instructor is asking for. Look for key verbs (i.e., summarize, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, etc.), and ensure that the student understands how to tackle those tasks.

Next, ask the student if (s)he has received any feedback on any previously submitted writing. If so, definitely use that prior feedback as a guide for your session. Instructors like to see their students improve, so students should not continue to make the same mistakes on subsequent assignments. Have the student identify any previously noted problem areas, jot them down, and keep the list handy as you move through the session.

Then move on to what, if any, writing the student has brought in. Many students will come to sessions with the intent to brainstorm, in which case provide a space for students to do so. If the student does have writing in tow, one of you should read the composition aloud. If a student does not feel comfortable reading, you can do it. Reading aloud allows both you and the student to catch any awkward sentence structures, sentence-level errors, clarity, flow, and readability issues. By using this practice, students will often hear when something doesn’t sound right and correct it themselves; applaud them for doing so on their own.

Plagiarism and Citing the Session
As you know, plagiarism is a serious offense and occurs as the result of passing the work of another off as your own. Because of this, please ensure that any and all work that a tutee does during a session is his/her own and is NOT yours. To help with this, refrain from making any markings directly on a student’s work, and use the Socratic Method to ask questions to help the student arrive at his/her own answer.

To further avoid plagiarism, please have the student appropriately cite any assistance he/she received. Here are some sample citations to help:

**MLA style:**

**Works Cited**

Williams, Shana. Assistance given to the author at the Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center. Ms. Williams and I worked on developing a thesis statement in response to gender roles in William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. During our session, we discussed how to answer the academic question, write a well-developed thesis statement, and subsequently outline the remainder of the paper. Ms. Williams modeled outlining strategies for me that I was able to mirror and implement when writing my own paper. Leavenworth, KS. 21 Sept. 2018.
APA style:

References
Mendoza, Enrique M. A. (2018). Assistance given to the author at the Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center. During the session, Mr. Mendoza and I not only jointly discussed the implications of the writing assignment, but also how to structure my overall Economics report. Although the theme of the report is my choice, Mr. Mendoza helped me to come up with the proper focus and scope of an economics topic and, from there, we were able to develop a working thesis and outline to help guide me in my research. As a result of this session, I am much more comfortable with the direction of my project and understand what is expected of me. Leavenworth, KS.

Chicago style:

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Beckley, Victoria A., Ph. D. Assistance given to the author at the Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center. Dr. Victoria Beckley and I jointly discussed the patriotic spirit of the colonists prior to the American Revolution. Through the process of extended proofreading, I was able to change the organization of my paper and significantly improve my grammar and mechanics. While we agreed that the sentiment of the colonists was disdainful towards the British Crown, I disagreed regarding the relationship between the Crown’s oppression and the colonists’ actions. Through this discussion with Dr. Beckley, I was able to further develop my argument and articulate the scholarship surrounding “mob mentalities” and revolutionary happenings. Leavenworth, KS, 21 September 2018.

Or:

NOTES
1. Beckley, V. A., Ph. D. Assistance given to the author at the Keleher Learning Commons Tutoring and Writing Center. Dr. Victoria Beckley and I jointly discussed the patriotic spirit of the colonists prior to the American Revolution. Through the process of extended proofreading, I was able to change the organization of my paper and significantly improve my grammar and mechanics. While we agreed that the sentiment of the colonists was disdainful towards the British Crown, I disagreed regarding the relationship between the Crown’s oppression and the colonists’ actions. Through this discussion with Dr. Beckley, I was able to further develop my argument and articulate the scholarship surrounding “mob mentalities” and revolutionary happenings. Leavenworth, KS, 21 September 2018.
Part 5: Tutoring Best Practices – Dos and Don’ts

Effective Tutors Are/Do...

• Patient
• Honest
• Flexible
• Good Listeners
• Professional
• Willing to share their own experiences
• Collaborative
• Teach the student how to learn
• Confident
• Use available resources
• Dependable
• Maintain confidentiality
• Model and encourage effective communication
• Maintain high integrity
• Admit mistakes
• Encouraging

Effective Tutors Do Not...

• Guesstimate/appropriate grades or offer evaluative remarks
• “Professor Bash”
• Question a grade given by a professor
• Express frustration at a student
• Encourage passivity
• Make marks directly on a student’s work
• Assist with assignments that are meant to be done individually
• Place a student’s work in front of him/herself (keep the work in front of the student or between the two of you)
• Give false hope about a grade a student might expect to receive
• Allow a student to create a sense of dependence on tutoring
Part 6: Study Skills and Strategies for Student Effectiveness

Time Management
Many of the students we see may struggle with time management and academic planning. Here are some helpful hints and tips you can offer them to develop these skills:

**Top 10 Time Management Tactics:**

10. Get a calendar/academic planner and USE it!

9. Make a “To Do” list.

8. Work at the most effective time of the day for you. Find your peak hour of the day and be productive during that time.

7. Reward yourself for getting things done.

6. Make a list of goals. Classify whether they are academic, personal, social, etc. Rank them in terms of importance to you, how difficult they are, and associated anxiety level.

Goal setting consists of the following components:

- Be Thorough: Think through your goals carefully. Have you included goals relating to all areas of your life?
- Be organized: Structure your time realistically and in such a way that YOU are in control of your time, not the other way around. Make sure the time you spend doing certain tasks is quality time. Make lists to reduce any anxiety you may have.
- Be realistic: Make sure that your goals are realistic so that you avoid disappointment and frustration. Find your limits and stay within them.
- Be accountable: It is easier to be accountable to others when you have set limits for yourself.
- Be committed: Stick to your goals and keep your promises to yourself. Once you have proven to yourself that you can accomplish your goals, your anxiety will decrease.
- Be kind: Be good to yourself – both your mind and your body. Make sure you have a balance between work and play. Reward yourself once you have accomplished your goals.

5. Make a weekly schedule skeleton. Block off all the times you are in class, sleeping, and meal times. Make sure you include free time too! This will help you determine what your peak hours of the day are.

4. Make a daily time log. Write down everything you did (or remember doing) yesterday and how long it took you to do each thing. You will be surprised at how much time you spend doing some things and how little time you spend on others.

3. Plan Ahead. Use the last few minutes of each day to plan for the next day.
2. Don’t Procrastinate. We usually procrastinate when we find a job too large or overwhelming, so make the task smaller by breaking it down into smaller tasks.

1. DON’T PROCRASTINATE.

Goal Setting: Help Students be Managers of Their Own Learning

• Encourage students to develop a work schedule that they will be able to stick to. Schedules are part of the prewriting-writing-rewriting process, and everyone needs to learn how long they can spend on each task without ceasing to be productive.

• At the end of each session or segment of the session, review what you have done. Better yet, ask the student to review it and remind the student of anything (s)he has not included.

• Try to think of mnemonic devices or “tricks” to help students memorize new rules. Once the student gets used to the idea, you can work together on making up mnemonics for each new rule, strategy, or process.

• Teach students how to outline ideas and papers—no matter how short. Organization is crucial.

• Aim for quality not quantity of work—and remember to praise all advances, no matter how small. A little positive reinforcement goes a long way.

(Section adapted from Austin College’s Peer Tutor Handbook)

Test Taking Strategies

• Attend class regularly
• Avoid cramming
• Create a study group and teach each other the material
• Know the test format
• Over-learning never hurts and often helps
• Summarize notes and study outline before the test to review key terms
• Take breaks during study time – 10 minutes for every hour of studying is recommended
• Eat well, RELAX and get a good night’s sleep

Essay Test Strategies

• Read all the questions before beginning
• Look for key terms that may help “jog” memory
• Begin by answering the easiest question
• This will lessen frustration and build confidence
• Jot down any ideas which immediately come to mind
• Make an outline
• If you don’t finish, the professor will see where you were trying to go
• Keep track of the time – do not spend more time on questions which are worth fewer points
• Write legibly
• Leave space for added ideas and corrections
• Check for grammatical errors and misspellings before turning in your test

**Multiple Choice Strategies**

• Use the process of elimination – it is easy to pick out the answers which are obviously wrong
• Answer questions before reading answer choices – this will help you anticipate what the answer choices might be
• If you do not know the answer, go on because the answer may be found in subsequent questions
• Beware of questions with “no,” “not,” and “none.” These words easily change the meaning of questions
• Change your answer if, and only if, you feel strongly about it, or if you misread the question

**If You Must Guess**

• Reject answers that use specific determiners such as: everyone, always, never, etc.
• Choose answers which use qualifying terms such as: Often, most, etc.
• Choose the answer which first caught your eye.

**Assessing Your Test-Taking Pattern**

Evaluating your own test taking habits and identifying your weaknesses are the first steps toward improving your performance, not only as a test-taker, but also as a tutor. Which of the following applies to you?

1. Information Gap: I do not remember encountering this material at all, or I glossed over it or did not have it in my notes.
2. Retention Gap: I studied this, but I could not call it up from memory.
3. Over/Under Generalization: I eliminated too much or did not eliminate enough information when studying for this test.
4. Misinterpretation of Information: I incorrectly understood the information when I initially read the text or heard it in lecture.
5. Misreading: I made decoding errors in reading the question or response.
6. General Vocabulary Gap: I did not know the correct meaning or assumed an incorrect meaning of general vocabulary.
7. Inability to Decipher: I could not get past the grammatical structure of the question or response.
8. Jumping to Conclusions: I did not fully consider all the responses or did not take the time to consider the question carefully.
9. Mis-keying: I knew the correct answer, but I copied the wrong response on the answer sheet.

**Managing Test Anxiety**

• Recognition – Listen to your body and decide what you are feeling anxious about.
• Preparation – Do not prepare for a test the night before and expect to learn everything.
• Attitude – Your frame of mind concerning an exam can have an effect on how well you do on the exam. Remember: this is only one test.
• Physical Needs – Maintain good eating and sleeping habits.
• Test Day – Avoid caffeine, sugar and nicotine because these stimulants set off a process that can result in rapid fluctuations of sugar levels, which produce symptoms of anxiety and panic. Arrive at the test location early. Wear a watch and check it frequently as you pace yourself through the test. Choose a seat to minimize distractions.

(Section adapted from Austin College’s Peer Tutor Handbook)

Timed Writing Evaluations
Some students may seek help with preparing for in-class writing assignments or exams. Here are some best practices to use when teaching students how to tackle these tasks:

Prior to Evaluation:
• Read text(s) in advance
  o Discern thesis
  o Locate what type of support is given
• Review prior readings
  o Discern theses
  o Locate what type of support is given
• Review rhetorical and analytical strategies
  o Logos – appeal to logic
  o Ethos – appeal to credibility
  o Pathos – appeal to emotion
  o Figurative language
  o Tropes – figures of speech
  o Tone
  o Diction [word choice] – connotation/denotation

Day of Evaluation:
1. Dissect the prompt
   a. Circle the “question” words
      i. How – by/through [process/procedure]
      ii. Why – because [cause and effect]
      iii. What – this/that [list]
   b. Underline verbs – discern what you’re being asked to do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Break into separate parts and evaluate how the parts affect the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Identify similarities and differences, emphasizing similarities, in two or more texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Identify similarities and differences, emphasizing differences, in two or more texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Ascribe a value to a text based on analysis and evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>Give reasons for happenings or situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize</td>
<td>Organize and bring together the main points only; NO evaluation!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize</td>
<td>Coherently combine ideas from a number of texts to support your main argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. (Re)Read Source Text(s)
   a. Pick apart support based on what you’re being asked to do
   b. Relate texts to each other (if there are more than one)
      i. Use a chart or word/concept map to draw any comparisons/contrasts

3. Compose thesis
   a. Appropriately ANSWER the question you are being asked
   b. 2 parts: argument and roadmap

4. Construct outline from thesis
   a. Place thesis in introduction
   b. Craft topic sentences with transitional phrases
   c. Restate thesis in conclusion

5. Begin writing
   a. Start from the beginning
   b. Get your thoughts out!
      i. Use the highlighting function to mark things for later [or star the margin if you’re writing long-hand]

6. Review your writing
   a. SPELL CHECK
   b. Read your work “out loud” [mouth the words as you go through it]
   c. Be sure you have ample support for all of your claims
   d. Ensure that you’ve used transitional phrases to link one point to the next
   e. Double check that you’ve integrated your source text properly
      i. Lead into your source text with a signal phrase (i.e., “the author argues/contends/writes/states…”)
      ii. Employ the source text: quote, paraphrase, or summary
      iii. Cite your source(s)!
      iv. Give justification for or analysis of the excerpt you chose. What is the reader supposed to do with this information?

7. Breathe – You’re done!

*Helpful Tips:*
- If using a computer, have one Word document for your composition, and another for your notes (if permissible)
- Don’t think of the exam in terms of its duration
  - Break it up into chunks/steps – this will help to defray mental fatigue
- When taking notes on your text(s), consider using different colored highlighters to categorize different concepts
  - Easier to recall (“see” in your mind) during pressure situations
Righting Wrongs – Learning From Errors

Mistakes are only worth making if we learn from them. Please reiterate this to students: it’s not only okay to make mistakes, but it’s expected! To that effect, encourage students to look at remarks and keep a log so that they can refrain from repeating their mistakes. This is especially important in terms of their writing progress. It will help you to keep an accurate record at the end of your sessions, too, so that students are not habitually working on the same issues in each session.

Reading Comprehension

Many students encounter this problem and are often unsure about how to fix it. In college, knowing and understanding what you have just read is of key importance. Here are some strategies below to help you better understand what you read and to help you get the most out of what you read.

General Tips

- While you are reading, underline or highlight important words or phrases.
- Don’t highlight everything!
- Try to pick out the main ideas of each paragraph.
- Jot down main ideas, key words, or important aspects in the margins.
- If you are in a hurry, read the first sentence and the last sentence of each paragraph.

Anticipation Guides

This reading strategy can be applied to any subject matter and is one of the best ways to get the most out of what you read. An anticipation guide is simply a list of questions about the article/selection you are about to read. Before you begin to read and take notes, do the following:

- Scan the title and the first paragraph of the selection /article.
- Write down questions, such as “what seems to be the main idea of this article?”; “what do I expect to learn from this?” and other questions that may come to mind upon approaching the article/selection.
- Write down questions that you may have that could be answered after you have read the article, such as “what methods does the author use to prove his/her point?” and “what are the shortcomings of the argument, if any, the author presents?”
- When you have finished reading, see if you can go back and answer the questions you have written down. These questions may serve as a useful study guide for you later on.

Reading Comprehension Tips

(The K-W-L Strategy is adapted from Content Area Reading, Vacca and Vacca, 1994.)

The K-W-L strategy stands for “What do I KNOW, what do I WANT to know, and what have I LEARNED?” It is another reading strategy that is applicable to many subject fields and whose notes can serve as a useful study guide. This is how it works:
Divide a sheet of paper up into three columns and label them as follows:

- What do I know?
- What do I want to know?
- What have I learned?

Before you read the article/selection, fill in the first column. What do you know about the subject you are reading about? Fill in any background information you may already have about the subject in this column. After you fill in the “what do I know” column, fill in the next column, “What do I want to know?” In this column, write down any questions you may have about the subject. Write down things you want to know more about, and questions you think might be answered by the end of the article. After you read the article, fill in the last column, “What have I learned?” Hopefully, by the time you are done reading the article, any questions you may have had earlier will be answered. If not, go back and re-read the sections of the article that you did not understand.

**Note Taking**

Note taking is an important and extremely critical study skill that many students need to develop, especially during their first year of school. Here are some pointers that can help you retain more information. Note taking is a THREE-PART PROCESS: “before,” “during,” and “after” phases.

#1 - The first phase is the “before” phase. Before you go to class to take notes, there are a couple of things you can do to make your time in lecture more effective. They are:

- DO THE ASSIGNED READING! Professors aren’t the only ones who have to prepare for class – you do too! Reading before going to class will help clarify points presented in lecture.
- Write down questions about the reading. These can be asked during class. The professors usually leave time for your questions, and asking questions can even improve your grade! This is because most professors have a portion of the grade set aside for participation, and asking a questions shows active interest and participation in the class.

#2 - The second phase is the “during” phase. Once you are in class, ready to take notes, remember these things:

- Do not try to write down everything the lecturer says! First of all, this is nearly impossible to do, and is an inefficient use of time and energy. Instead, pick out key points in the lecture and write those down instead.
- Use abbreviations. Sometimes it is too hard to try and write down full words, so abbreviate whenever possible.
- Listen carefully! You need to listen carefully to what is said so that you can pick up on those key points we mentioned earlier. Active listening is always preferable to passive listening.
• Write questions about things you do not understand. If there is something you don’t understand, write it down and ask the professor during class, or after class, if time runs out. These questions can also serve as a useful study tool when reviewing for a future test.
• If the professor posts an outline, COPY IT DOWN. Usually, if the professor puts up an outline, it will contain the main points of his/her lecture and will save you from having to write more later on. This will also help you to study for tests and quizzes that you may have over the information presented.

#3 - The last phase is the “after” phase. Yes, there are a few things you can do after you have taken notes to make sure that everything “sticks.” They are:

• Review. Reviewing your notes in those last few minutes of class can help you not only see what you have just learned, but can also help you retain what you have just learned a little better. Also, reviewing your notes before the next class can help you prepare for that class by reminding you of important topics discussed, and any questions you may have had.
• Recall. Recall what you have learned. Look at the questions you have written down and try to answer them without looking at your notes. This will help jog your memory and improve retention.
• Recite. It sounds silly to read out loud to yourself, but it is actually a valuable study tool for helping you retain what you have learned. It has been proven that students retain information better if it has been presented to them in multiple sensory modalities. You have heard and seen the lecture once, and written down the notes. Now it is your job to review what you have written and heard. Read your notes to yourself out loud. Hearing the lecture again will help you retain the information.

Using this three-phase system will help you improve information retention, and will hopefully serve as a useful study tool.

(Section adapted from Austin College’s Peer Tutor Handbook)

Part 7: Tutoring ELL/ESL Students and Students with Learning Disabilities

Tutoring English Language Learning (ELL)/English as Second Language (ESL) Students

Tips for Working with ESL Students

• Discuss the student’s goals with him/her before getting started.
• Speak clearly, naturally and avoid using lots of slang.
• Ask students to repeat what you have just said to show understanding.
• If a student has trouble understanding you, write down what you are saying. If you have trouble understanding the student, ask him or her to write down what he/she is saying.
• Use lots of repetition.
• Put everything you cover into context.
• Encourage each student to take an active part of the tutoring session; there should be "equal time" for the student to talk or ask questions and it is sometimes easy to forget to stop and wait
for questions to be formulated. Sometimes you need to wait in silence before a question gets asked. In some cultures a student does not ask questions.

- Thank the student for questions. Some students are deathly afraid to ask a question, so praising a question is a good way to encourage more.
- Encourage students to make friends outside of class because this will improve their English.
- Don't treat students like children. English language proficiency does not indicate intelligence or ability level.
- Don't try to change your students' language patterns by teaching them Standard English. Respect their oral speech habits and encourage them to add Standard English to their everyday language patterns. ESL students may ask you to correct their speech when they feel comfortable, but don't assume this is the case unless asked.
- Use plenty of examples.
- Don't act as if you understand the student if you don't.
- Don't speak too slowly; it might tend to raise your voice volume and/or to make your speech unnatural. Although it might be hard to understand your normal speech pattern, with practice the student will become familiar with it and, in the long run, it will help him/her understand other native English speakers. You can lengthen your speech and insert more pauses; this might help a student understand more easily.
- Don't be afraid to correct the student.

**Techniques for Questioning ESL Students**

Within the tutoring session, frequently check students' comprehension to make sure they really understand concepts. ESL students may nod their heads as though they understand when they really don't. Encourage participation and check comprehension in non-threatening ways, and provide cooperative experiences by using the following techniques.

- **Most Difficult:** Wh- questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why, Which & How) "Why is A more difficult?"
- **Easier:** OR questions. "Which is more difficult, A or B?"
- **Easiest:** YES / NO questions check comprehension, but do not rely on this strategy too much. "Is this difficult for you?"

Begin with the most difficult question type. If these cannot be answered by the student, try a less difficult level to help them understand what you’re asking; then work toward the more difficult levels.

- Ask the students to give examples when explaining concepts.
- Ask students to become the tutor and explain the concept to you.
- Search for answers to questions with the students.
- Use restatement to clarify students' responses; "I think you said . . ."
- Admit it if there is a communication problem; "I don't understand."
- Write down words the student does not know.

(Section adapted from “Tutor Training: Tips for Working with ESL Students”)

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Tutoring Students with Learning Disabilities

(Section adapted from College Students with Learning Disabilities and “Teaching Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficits.”)

A Learning Disability (LD) is generally identified as a disorder which affects the manner in which individuals with average to superior intelligence take in, retain, and express information. An LD is:

- Presumably due to central nervous system dysfunction.
- Cross-cultural: it occurs regardless of racial or ethnic origin.
- Often inconsistent: an LD student may manifest difficulties in relation to learning demands and setting. That is, it may be more apparent during certain times of a person’s life, or in response only to certain academic areas.
- Common: experts estimate that 10% of the population evidences learning disabilities. As part of a support service that works with students with learning disabilities, it is important to remember that LDs are also:
  - Invisible: because learning disabilities are neurological disorders, their existence is not obvious to others. We cannot recognize a student with a learning disability by appearance or demeanor. Since LDs cut across gender, race, socio-economic and cultural lines, there is no “picture” of what a student with an LD looks like.
  - Frustrating: because LDs are invisible, teachers, tutors, and peers often do not understand the additional challenges faced by an individual with a disability. Students with LDs are often put in the awkward position of having to convince others that they have a disability, that this disability interferes with the process of learning, and that they are entitled to accommodations for this disability under law.
  - Misunderstood: LDs are neurological disorders that affect the way students perceive, understand, process, manipulate and communicate information. This fact does not mean that students cannot perceive, understand, process, manipulate or communicate. It just means that these students may do these things in a different manner or at a different rate than most other students, just as the visually impaired student may read a textbook in a different manner than most students.

A student with an LD will generally have difficulty in one or more of the following areas:

- oral expression
- listening comprehension
- written expression
- basic reading skills and reading comprehension
- mathematical calculation
- problem solving

Since an integral part of the peer-tutor interaction is assisting students in the writing process, it might be a good idea to be familiar with some of the characteristics of the written language skills a learning disabled student may present:
• difficulty planning a topic or organizing thoughts on paper
• difficulty with sentence structure
• slow written production
• inability to copy correctly from a book or dry-erase board

A paper written by an LD student might have some of the following characteristics:

• frequent spelling errors (omissions, substitutions, transpositions)
• limited length
• poor penmanship (poorly framed letters, incorrect use of capitalization, trouble with spacing)
• overly large handwriting

Strategies for Effectively Tutoring a Student with a Learning Disability

• Ask questions, repeat information or answers, and listen to the students’ comments and questions patiently
• Offer verbal as well as written remarks; be sure to clearly and accurately sum up the tutorial, and articulate clearly the recommendations for revision you offer the student at the end of a session.
• Spend time helping students analyze the writing assignment. With poor reading skills, some LD students write well on the wrong topic; others may have mistaken notions of “what’s expected” by the instructor.
• Help students to focus on the question of audience very early in the writing process. Many LD students find writing so agonizing that they are happy just to get something down. They may not spend any time considering what it will be like for readers to plow through their essays.
• Warn students against trying to “get organized” or write a formal outline too early in the writing process. Instead, recommend free writing, clustering, drawing or diagramming.
• Work on selecting or generating a thesis or main idea statement from the student’s free writing, draft, etc.
• Try using an “idea list” to help students organize their notes, free writing, or draft. Once they have a main point, have them list the ideas expressed in their free writing. Work on organizing this list in support of the thesis by numbering each item. Then revise the idea list: ask the student if there are any ideas that don’t develop the thesis, and cross these out.
• Allow the student to tape record a tutorial if (s)he wishes.
• Provide adequate opportunity for the student to ask questions.

(Section adapted from College Students with Learning Disabilities and “Teaching Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficits.”)
Works Cited


