# Peer Tutor Workshop Guide: Introductory Training Session

**National Scholar Foundation**

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Introduction

This peer tutor workshop guide will help you conduct an introductory training session for peer tutors. This guide is designed for students and educators organizing a peer tutoring program for middle and high school students (although, this guide can also be useful at the collegiate level). The objectives of the workshop include: having a discussion on the qualities of an effective peer tutor, understanding the different types of learning, and practicing peer tutoring in a fun scenario.

Why have a workshop?

As the demand and enthusiasm for peer tutor programs continues to increase, it is important that new tutors are both trained and are able to help tutees effectively. While peer tutoring has many positive advantages, research has found that tutors who were trained had significantly greater success with their tutees compared to tutors who do not receiving training (Staub and Hunt 1993). Further research has shown that a lack of trained tutors can impact the long term success of a peer tutoring program. Training tutors can also give them extra confidence in their abilities to be able to help their tutees using the best strategies they have.

How do I conduct a workshop?

There are several activities and handouts provided in this guide. The workshop is designed to be completed in 1-hour. Having an even number of participants can be helpful for the activities. Simply organize a workshop date and time with your tutors (it is helpful to have food at these workshops – contact us for details on how to get free food for your workshop), read over/prepare the activities as well as print out the handouts, and follow the provided directions. At the end of the workshop, have a brief discussion (~10 minutes) about what the students learned from the workshop and how it can be improved in the future (please share any insights with us!).

Where can I get additional help and find additional resources?

The National Scholar Foundation is currently partnering with schools to help develop more effective peer tutoring programs. If you would be interested in getting free help from our staff or have any questions, please send us an email: ContactUs@NationalScholarFoundation.org. In addition, continue to check the website as we develop additional resources: NationalScholarFoundation.org. Also, we highly encourage you to check out other resources available through one of our partner organizations, the Peer Tutoring Resource Center: http://www.peertutoringresource.org/
Activity 1: A Great Tutor Drawing (~15 minutes)

This activity is a great way to start the workshop as it creates a discussion between the participating tutors about what makes a good and effective peer tutor.

Directions:
1. Tutors will need paper and writing utensils such as markers
2. Tutors can be split up into several groups (size of groups depends on the number of tutors participating in the workshop)
3. In their groups, tutors will have 10 minutes to work together to draw and label a picture of “A Great Tutor.” Thinking of characteristics and drawing an image that might represent that. For one could draw a watch and then write next to it “lots of patience.” (Please see example on the next page)
4. For the last 5 minutes of the activity, have the groups share and explain their drawing to each other and have a discussion about what quality traits and characteristics make up an effective tutor.

This allows students to learn about the different expectations for peer tutors, without giving them a list or telling them what the expectations are.
Example: A Great Tutor Drawing
Activity 2: How Do I Learn Best? (~20 Minutes)

Different learning strategies work best for different students. It is important that peer tutors are able to adapt and change their lesson plans based on the needs and strategies that are going to prove most effective to helping the tutee. For example, if the tutee is more of a visual learning, a peer tutor may try to implement more visual learning activities into the meeting sessions. This activity helps tutors realize the importance of adaptability with different tutees learning styles. It can also help tutors recognize and discover strategies that might work best with different types of learners.

Directions:
1. Have tutors create small groups (this activity can also been done independently if needed)
2. Give each group one of the scenario which are listed below (you may also come up with more scenarios if you would like).
3. Tutors can work together to brainstorm a list of strategies or ways they feel they could best help the student (~10 minutes).
4. Have groups share their scenarios and their strategies to the other groups when done (~5 minutes).
5. Allow 5 minutes for the students to review the handout Different Types of Learning Styles and Strategies at the end.

Scenarios:
- Maggie, your tutee, says that she believes looking at visuals such as pictures, charts, and graphs helps her to better understand material
- Your tutee, John, has a hard time understanding big blocks of text and would rather have the information verbally explained to him.
- You’ve noticed that your new tutee, Christina, struggles with organization skills and often misplaces things.
- For her English class, Callie has to do a lot of reading, but she has trouble understanding and synthesizing what she has read.
- For his biology and chemistry classes, David needs to memorize a lot of difficult terminology and concepts.
- Your new tutee, Grace, has difficulty sitting still and staying concentrated during your tutor sessions.
- You’ve noticed that your tutee, Elaine, seems to have a hard time understanding material when the teacher is explaining it verbally without any visuals or handouts.
Example Scenario and Strategies:

Scenario – Your new tutee, Grace, has difficulty sitting still and staying concentrated during your tutor sessions. How can Grace’s tutor best help her?

Her tutor could try to include some more hands-on activities into their tutor session. This could include coming up with games to play or some activity that involved moving around. The tutor could even try having Grace write answers down on a whiteboard and having her hold them up.

It is important to note that tutees may not always say what strategies help them learn best. It is possible that they might not even know what does and does not work for them. One of the most helpful things a tutor can do, is get to know the tutee! A tutor can try out a wide variety of activities and games with their tutee to help them discover how they learn best. Also, find out what the tutee likes and dislikes, that way when a tutor is explaining things, they can relate concepts to a student's hobbies or passions. For example, a great way to help tutees understand difficult terminology or concepts is through the use of analogies. Making analogies that are related to things the tutee knows a lot about or is passionate about in their lives, makes those difficult concepts easier to understand.

For more information about different types of learning styles and strategies please see the handout for the Different Types of Learning Styles and Strategies.
Handout: Types of Learning Styles and Strategies

Below is a list of different types of learners including methods that could be implemented into tutor sessions that best support this type of learning style.

**Visual Learners** learn through images and pictures. These types of learners enjoy being able to physically see something that allows them to understand better.

- **Draw images**
  - This method works great for trying to memorize definitions or vocabulary words. Have students draw a picture next to the words or concepts they are trying to learn so that they can associate that concept with a given image to improve understanding.
- **When explaining concepts use hand gestures**
  - When verbally explaining a concept to a visual learning tutee, try using specific hand gestures for each concept. Then whenever mentioning that same topic repeat the same hand gesture so the tutee can associate your body language and hands with that concept.
- **Color code**
  - When having to read or write, visual learners can benefit from having a color code. For example, the student could write or highlight every vocabulary word in red, every definition in blue, and every explanation in green. This can help with organization and allow tutees to associate a given color with a concept.

**Verbal Learners** learn by reading and interacting with text or writing.

- **White boards**
  - During meeting sessions, ask your tutee different comprehension questions and have them write their answers down on a whiteboard or a piece of paper.
- **Practice quizzes**
  - If there is time before the meeting session, create a practice-like test that tutees could take. This will allow them to understand where in the subject matter are the concepts they understand very well, and the concepts they may need to review.
- **Annotation**
  - This strategy works great if a tutee needs to interpret a visual (such as an image, graph, or chart), or the tutee needs to listen to a recording and understand. Have the tutee annotate or write down explanations beside the visuals that they can refer to later that explain the visuals to them. While listening to an audio tape or watching a video, have the tutee write down notes to themselves that they can refer to later.
Repetition
  ○ If tutees are struggling to memorize explanations or definition, have them write it down and copy it repeatedly. This act of repetition will allow them to better remember the concepts.

**Auditory Learners** learn by hearing and speaking.

- Explain concepts out loud and clearly
  ○ When explaining concepts to the tutee, explain them out loud rather than having them read an explanation. As the tutor, it is important to explain things slowly, clearly and in a logical order so that the listening tutee can follow along in your explanation.
- Audio recordings
  ○ With the consent of the tutor, allow the tutee to audio record the tutor explaining a concept. Later, the tutee can replay this audio recording to review the concepts the tutor explained during their meeting.
- Come up with mnemonic devices
  ○ For example “PEMDAS” is a mnemonic device used in math to help students remember the order of operations. Each letter in PEMDAS stands for a different operation (P is parentheses, E is exponents, and so on). Tutors and tutees can work together to come up with their own devices like this to remember different concepts.
- Use the subject material in a song
  ○ Have the tutee chose a tune they known well (such as a nursery rhyme). Work together to write your own lyrics to this tune while incorporating subject matter and explanations into the song. This way, if the tutee can remember the little song, they can better recall different concepts.

**Kinesthetic Learners** learn by doing. Hands-on activities are the most effective for these types of learners.

- White boards
  ○ During meeting sessions, ask your tutee different comprehension questions and have them write their answers down on a whiteboard and hold them up to show you their answer.
- True or False questions activity
  ○ Ask the tutee different true or false questions. If the tutee thinks the answer is true then have them walk to one side of the room, if the tutee thinks the answer is false have them walk to the other side. (This could also work with having them stand
up or sit down) This method is great for getting tutees active while still reviewing concepts.

- Games (please note that many of these games require the tutor to do some preparation before the meeting session)
  - There is a wide variety of games that can be played to help review concepts. Please note that not all games yield themselves to every type of subject material. Some examples are games such as writing many different questions on an inflatable beach ball. Pass the beachball to your tutee and when they catch it, have them answer the question that their right thumb is touching.
  - A matching game also works well to review different material. Using flashcards, write a vocabulary word on one flashcard and write the definition on another flashcard. Lay all the vocabulary word cards on a table, and give the tutee the definition cards and ask them to match each definition with the corresponding vocabulary word. This activity does not have to be used just for vocabulary words and definitions but can also be used with matching concepts to explanations.
  - Another activity that works great especially for foreign language learners is to write each verb the tutee may need to memorize on a different slip of paper and place it in a jar. Then have them pick a verb out of a jar and roll a dice. If they roll a one, they have to conjugate the verb in the “I” form, if they roll a two, they have to conjugate the verb in the “you” form, and so on.
Activity 3: Shoe Tying (~15 minutes)

Peer tutoring can be challenging. The best way to learn how to become an effective peer tutor is through practice. This fun activity is designed to get you started on your path towards becoming a great peer tutor.

Directions:
1. Have students get into pairs and assign one student as the tutor and the other as the tutee.
2. The tutor in this activity will guide the tutee through tying their shoes (the tutee will pretend that they do not know how to tie their shoes). The tutor can only talk the tutee through the process. It is important that the tutee follow the directions exactly. In addition to only being able to talk, the tutor is not allowed to use the word shoelace. (~5 minutes).
3. After completing the exercise, have the pairs write down and discuss the difficulties with being the tutor and tutee as well as how what you learned can be translated to a real tutoring session (~5 minutes).
4. Allow 5 minutes for the students to review the handout Additional Thoughts to Share with New Tutors at the end.
Handout: Additional Thoughts to Share with New Tutors

_Be positive._ An important part of peer tutoring is helping a tutee build confidence in themselves as learners. Encouraging the tutee and even rewarding them with praise when they do something well or succeed is a big part of building that confidence.

_Using humor._ Humor can be a great tool for tutors during their sessions as it can help to relax the atmosphere and make the session feel more casual. This may help the tutee to feel more comfortable during your sessions and help the tutor make a connection with their tutee. While it may be advantageous to use humor, it is important that humor is never used to make fun of or to joke about a tutee’s abilities.

_Keep it confidential._ Although there may not be an actual rule that a tutor must keep all information regarding a tutee confidential, it is good to do so. As a tutor, tutees might decide to share personal information such as their grades. Also, some students may be embarrassed or not want others to know they are being tutored, therefore it is best not to mention names of a student you may be tutoring. It is important that a tutor works to maintain the trust between them and their tutee to ensure a good relationship between the two.

_Be adaptable._ Find a way that works for your tutee and be aware that what works for one might not work for another. Be open to trying a variety of methods and strategies until you find something that works best for the tutee.