It's the first day of tutoring and you're meeting your tutee(s) for the first time, how do you go about getting to know them?

Here are some suggestions!!

1. **Relax!** Tutoring can be fun if you approach your tutoring time with a positive attitude and an open mind.

2. **Don't** be discouraged by a negative first impression of your tutee. The way you and your tutee respond to each other when you first meet will be very different from the way you interact in a few months' time.

3. **View** your tutoring sessions as a learning opportunity not just for your tutee, but for you as well. You're helping your tutee to learn more about a certain subject, but even a very young tutee may have personal insights that will enhance your understanding of a completely different subject, or of the tutee him/herself.

4. **Level** the playing field between you and your tutee. Avoid dressing or acting in a way that draws attention to your socioeconomic differences.

5. **Look** for common denominators. Do you and your tutee share a hobby? A favorite song or musician? A favorite dog breed? Any interests or beliefs you have in common will improve your chances of building an effective relationship with your tutee.

6. **Expect** highs and lows in your tutoring relationship. No one can get along all the time with everyone, and not every tutoring session will end with an "Aha!" moment. Review past success with your tutee, apply what you've learned through trial and error, and try to head off trouble spots as soon as you see one.

“Nine tenths of education is encouragement.” Anatole France

Activity/Conversation Starters

TRUE or FALSE?
Write a list (in no particular order) with three facts about yourself and one false fact. Ask your students to do the same. Switch lists and see if you can guess which facts about each other are true or false.

PORTRAITS
Draw a picture of each other, keeping your portraits hidden from each other until you are both finished. Exchange your drawings when they’re done.

QUESTIONS
Ask the student what are three questions that he/she would like to know about you. This can be used in addition to or in place of the questions in the previous section entitled Getting to Know You Questions. Please respect the privacy and comfort of the students that you are working with when asking questions.

VOLUNTEER CORNER:
It was the last day of Creativity Camp, Summer 2008. It was a Field Day, and what had previously started out as a water balloon toss had quickly escalated into a full out water balloon war. A group of SRYI kids decided to ambush their favorite camp staff person—Chris Fake. They worked together to haul a large Gatorade cooler full of water, snuck up behind Chris, and proceeded to dump the entire cooler of water on his head. Needless to say, the end result was lots of laughs (mostly from the kids) and a sopping wet staff member!

If you have any funny/inspiring stories from working with the SRYI kids, please contact Meghann at 610-568-1527 or at Meghann.burton@alvernia.edu to be featured in the SRYI Scoop.

I just met my tutee this afternoon, and I can already tell that we’re not going to get along.

First impressions can be deceptive. Think about your feelings as you approached the meeting place. Were you fearful? Uneasy? Your tutee might have felt the same way. What you perceive as a hostile attitude or a cold personality may simply be your tutee’s response to fear.

Take some time to develop your tutoring relationship. Until you have invested in several tutoring sessions and have built up a level of trust, your tutee might not feel confident or safe enough to open up and be himself.

Be patient with your tutee and with yourself during this process.

My tutee comes from a lower socioeconomic background than I do, and doesn’t have very much. I’m not rich, but I still feel guilty for and self-conscious about everything I have that my tutee can’t have.

You can’t change your tutee’s economic circumstances, but you can minimize the appearance of financial inequality between you and your tutee. Leave expensive or trendy clothing, accessories and high-tech gadgets at home. Avoid talking about things you own or places you’ve visited if you believe that your tutee is unlikely to have similar experiences. The less attention you draw to your economic differences, the more you’ll help your tutee focus on your time together.

My tutee and I don’t share the same language or culture. We’re having a hard time connecting.

Getting to know someone, even someone who shares your language and culture, takes effort. Instead of focusing on your differences, try to find things in common with your tutee: your religious beliefs, a special hobby, favorite pet, or even a favorite food can be a starting point to connecting with your tutee.

Avoid using trendy or colloquial words that your tutee may have trouble translating or comprehending, or that otherwise emphasize your language barriers.

Tutoring at its most basic is about difference—specifically, the difference between what each of you knows about your tutoring subject—otherwise you would have nothing to offer as a tutor. But it’s also about sharing what you know and closing the gap of difference between you.

Reference: FASTEN webpage. For more suggestions, go to their website: http://www.urbanministry.org/wiki/overcoming-differences-tutoring-relationships-common-concerns-and-solutions

“Our greatest strength as a human race is our ability to acknowledge our differences, our greatest weakness is our failure to embrace them.” Judith Henderson
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Come see us at our office in the Upland Center, room 106!

Join our Holleran Center fan page on Facebook! Search Holleran Center for Community Engagement - Alvernia

Be sure to check out our other tutoring resources on our website!

On the SRYI volunteer page you will find:

- Articles on different subjects regarding tutoring and working with children
- Information on working with English Language Learners
- Links to helpful websites about literacy, math, games, and other activities that you can use with your tutee.