

South Reading Youth Initiative

Effective Communication

"This is a dumb story." "I hate math." "This is boring."

As a tutor, you have probably heard statements like these numerous times. Or, maybe you experienced the "silent treatment." Your response to these statements and behaviors has important implications on your relationship with your tutee as well as on how they respond to future frustration and problems. If your response to the first statement is "No, it's a very interesting story," you would miss a chance to let the student explore why they feel the way they do about the story. Responding with an observation such as, "There's something about the story you don't like," puts the student's feelings into words so they're identified and accepted, and encourages the student to continue to articulate their response.

Here are some more suggestions for helping you to better communicate with your

Elementary School

- Talk *with* younger children (not *at* them).
- Help them name their feelings (i.e. fear, embarrassment, jealousy, anger, happiness).
- Get down to their height. Kneeling, crouching, sitting, leaning forward will make it easier to connect with them.
- Stick to simple language and concrete terms when giving directions.
- Use lots of action words and colorful language for descriptions.
- Be upbeat, animated, confident, optimistic, and encouraging.
- Check frequently for understanding and observe faces and eyes.

Middle and High School

- Ask open-ended questions and elicit explanations.
- Invite and accept opinions.
- Strive to be nonjudgmental; avoid being "preachy" by refraining from absolutes such as "always," "never," and "should"
- Avoid overusing slang; it runs the risk of trivializing what you're saying. You are an adult and they will respect you more if you speak like one.
- Don't personalize teenagers' need to rebel against authority and test limits.
- Be warm and inviting but cautious about how familiar you become with teenagers; overfamiliarity can breed misunderstandings.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality.



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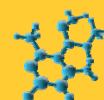
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Tips for Tutoring Math and Science

- Ask tutees to demonstrate knowledge by doing a different problem or explaining a concept back to you, instead of simply asking if s/he "understands."
- People learn differently: some are visual learners while others learn better by listening. Try to incorporate both strategies while you are tutoring (i.e. verbally explain and write-out/draw problems). Try to provide practical examples that will make the material more attainable.
- If a tutee does not understand a concept, explain it again using different words or examples. Repeating an explanation the same way a second time probably will not help your tutee understand. **This also applies in general to students who are not native English speakers (ESOL).**

For more math and science tips go to the referenced site below:

http://www.lamission.edu/learningcenter/docs/Math_Tips_for_Tutors.doc



VOLUNTEER CORNER:

For some reason, the younger participants (grades 2 and 3) had little or no homework. Kristine was put in charge of giving the kids an SRYI "homework" assignment, which was "Write about one good thing that happened at school, or about something special that none of the volunteers or staff know about you". The responses were quite varied, as these excerpts will show!

"When it was quiet in class, this boy, Giovanni, farted"

"When we were doing handwriting Ethan jumped out of his seat and did the moonwalk in front of Giovanni"

"I like to sing, I am very nice, and I will never disrespect you"

(Kids' brains work in very funny ways sometimes!)



Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us... and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.

-Garrison Keiller

Reading: High-frequency words

High-frequency words are those words that occur often in print. Rather than having to sound them out individually, try games with your tutee so that s/he will be able to read more fluently and recognize them when they see them. Remember that high-frequency words should be used in context and not “drilled.” Try some of the games below to work on high-frequency words: Word Hunt: pass out books, magazine, or newspapers. Show your tutee a word and then ask them to find it in print. Games: Use sight words in file folder games and card games such as “Go Fish” and “Bingo.”

For more sight-word ideas, go to the referenced site below:

Excerpted from Dr. Jean Feldman’s “Ready, Set, Read!”

<http://www.literacyconnections.com/DrJeanHiFrequency.php>

ESL

In your work with English Language Learners you may find it difficult to know when to correct students’ errors. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Focus on global errors (those that hinder communication), rather than local errors (those that do not interfere with communication).
- While it’s important to correct errors (so they do not remain permanent in students’ linguistic systems), remember not to overcorrect isolated errors which are not committed frequently. Too much emphasis on accuracy can heighten learner anxiety, which, in turn, will impede learning.
- Remember to consider your tutee’s needs, level of linguistic proficiency, and personal reaction to error correction.

Reference: Ariza, E.N., Morales-Jones, C.A., Yahya, N., & Zainuddin, H. (2002). *Why TESOL? Theories and issues in teaching English as a second language with a K-12 focus*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company: Dubuque, Iowa.



QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?

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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.

<http://www.alvernia.edu/about/holleran-center/sryivolunteer.html>