



Potential Tutoring Problems

1. “My assignment is due tomorrow. Will you help me?”

TUTOR RESPONSE: “Let’s take a look at the type of problem you have. We’ll work on something similar so you’ll be able to do the assignment.”

REMEMBER: It is not your job to do the student’s homework assignments. If you do, the students will not learn how to do the work on their own. Waiting until the last minute to do assignments may also be a sign of poor time management skills. Model time management behavior in your sessions.

2. “I’ve already done my homework. I just need you to check it for me.”

TUTOR RESPONSE: “We don’t proofread assignments, but I’ll tell you what I can do. If you’ll show me the areas you’re worried about, we’ll discuss those problems in general and take a look at your book. Then, you can check your homework.”

REMEMBER: It is not your job to make sure that everything a tutee turns in is perfect. Helping students with specific homework problems is not what you were hired to do. Review similar homework problems and help the student develop the critical thinking skills necessary to do his/her homework assignment independently. Tutees must learn how to check their own work and how to have confidence in the answers they give. If they can do this, they will:

- Be able to defend their answers.
- Understand more completely.
- Develop better self-esteem.
- Become more independent.

3. “I’ve written this paper that I have to give in Spanish to my class. Will you help me?” (Translation: “I did get it written in English, but I can’t write it in Spanish. Will you do the translation for me?”)

TUTOR RESPONSE: “You’ve gotten off to a good start. You have the paper written. Do as much of the translation as you can. I can’t help you with that. Once you’ve done as much as you can, right or wrong, then I’ll see what types of problems you’re having. We’ll work on those areas. Then, you can go back and finish your paper.”

REMEMBER: It’s not your job to do students’ assignments. You cannot be with the student forever. They need to learn how to do the work on their own.

4. “My instructor is terrible. I think she wants me to fail.”

TUTOR RESPONSE: “It sounds like you’re having a tough time in this class; I’m sorry to hear that. Perhaps you could show me some of the problems you are having difficulty understanding. I may be able to help clarify them for you. We may also need to review how you’re studying for the class. You may have to invest more study time so that lectures are more meaningful and less stressful.”

REMEMBER: Regardless of an instructor’s teaching style (or reputation), complaining with the student will not help him/her. The student will still have to find a way to understand the material and pass the course. Avoid talking about instructors. Students sometimes use this as an excuse to do poorly. The more you help them find ways to learn effectively, the less dependent they will be on learning ALL the material through lectures and class time. (Remember also that anything you say about an instructor can get back to that instructor, which will reflect negatively on both you and The Office of Learning Support Services.)

5. “Nothing works. I just don’t get it. I study all the time. I don’t know what to do.”

TUTOR RESPONSE: “If you want, you can take a quick test to determine your learning style. It’s easy and doesn’t take very long. Once you know whether you learn better by seeing, or by doing, or by hearing, we’ll both be able to study strategies to help you. Then, we’ll take a look at your book.

REMEMBER: Sometimes the students really are studying, but in an unbeneficial manner. The Office of Learning Support Services (OLSS) staff has resources to help with study skills. You may also want to refer the student to an OLSS staff member.

6. “I sick of this class. I’m dropping out.”

TUTOR RESPONSE: “I’m sorry to hear that. Before you make any decisions, why don’t you talk to one of the advisors in the Admissions Office? They may be able to help you find an alternative.”

REMEMBER: The student may be experiencing problems related to family, emotions, work, or something else that is unrelated to academics. These stresses can contribute to his/her feelings of hopelessness. If so, this situation is beyond the scope of your tutoring responsibilities. Please refer the student to her/his advisor, or to Ron Dannemiller, Coordinator of Learning Support Services.