

General Tutoring Valued Practices

Below are adapted valued practices for effective tutoring, identified by University of Central Florida Writing Center peer consultants and adapted by Director Scanlon's work in writing centers. Let's be clear: you cannot, in fact you should not, try to cover all of these in any one appointment. Rather, these are practices that guide our work in the WC|TS at Illinois Wesleyan. R. Mark Hall's *Around the Texts of Writing Center Work: An Inquiry-Based Approach to Tutor Education* is where these practices come from and is also the book we read in the UNIV 201 course for writing center tutors.¹

1. Greet your peer warmly; learn his, her, their, name; establish rapport with your peer. *It's important to set the tone early: we try to welcome our peer(s) and make them comfortable*
2. Spend some time learning assignment requirements, including the student's understanding of the topic and/or the professor's feedback. *We'll ask to find the answers to what steps has the student taken to understand the upcoming test, lecture, presentation, etc.? Have they talked to their professor?*
3. Learn about the student's processes, beliefs, & attitudes toward the task. How have they approached it thus far? Do they have any feedback from their professor? peers? etc.? *Are our peers nervous? excited? required to be with the tutor? How do they feel about what they're learning? Having the discussion and finding the answers to these questions will guide us in how to best support you.*
4. Set reasonable expectations and negotiate with your peer what to work on and why during the session. *We can't make you into an A++ student who understands every concept over night. We both need to manage our expectations. A tutoring contract can help here.*
5. Address your peer's learning beyond the specific task. *We try to figure out what you might use from what we've taught you today. We ask how might what you've learned be applicable in other classes or on another assignment?*
6. Ask questions and use directives to engage the student in active learning. *We aren't here to lecture you. Instead, we will check in throughout the appointment to make sure you're understanding our points. We may have you make notes and write things down. We won't just give you answers; instead, we'll use the "WH" (who, what, where, when, why, and how) questions or ask open ended questions instead of looking for yes or no answers.*

¹ Available in ebook form from Ames Library [here](#).

7. We'll address your concerns. (Goes back to 1-3). *We'll figure out why you came to us and what we might do to create a support environment in which you'll thrive.*
8. Focus on only a few specific issues to work on in a single consultation. (Goes back to 4). *As much as possible, we'll prioritize your concerns, figuring out what you most have to understand to do the next part. We'll use our limited time wisely.*
9. Prioritize global concerns that interfere with your peer's understanding before turning to details. *Look at what lessons have the largest impact and use your learning style to shepherd you through fundamental concepts.*
10. Set priorities not based on assumptions. *We'll look over your work before making assumptions. We'll help you with different methods of learning, reading all of your assignment/ writing/ project/ homework first. We'll look at your existing skills to help you set priorities from what you already have/ know how to do.*
11. Target selected patterns of repeated problems. Avoid a scattershot approach. *We won't just jump from concern to concern; rather, we'll address one concern at a time, looking for common problems that keep reappearing in their work. We'll make sure you understand one concept before moving to the next.*
12. Create opportunities for your peer to demonstrate learning by talking, practicing learning strategies, and problem solving. *We'll be honest about our own struggles with the topic and share how we overcame them. We may ask you what topics/ courses you're doing well with to find connections. We'll make you take notes and we will, too!*
13. Demonstrate active listening. Avoid dominating the conversation. Make effective use of silence. *We won't impose ourselves or our opinions. Instead, we'll give you a chance to think before we expect you to respond to us. We'll balance our time talking with your time responding.*
14. When identifying strengths, be specific. Avoid overly general praise that could be construed as predicting a grade. *We will **never** give out a grade. Instead, we'll focus on what you're doing well and point out how you might model this success elsewhere in your coursework.*
15. Offer specific, useful suggestions for revision. *We'll sometimes spend time together looking at ways to build on previous knowledge and methods to offer you "next steps." We'll also remind you to come back!*
16. Use, explain, and recommend [resources](#), print and online. *When useful, we'll remember to recommend professor office hours, pertinent websites, relevant*

textbooks, the librarians, your advisor, and the counseling center. We'll also draw on class notes if you have them.

17. Assist the student to make a plan for work after the consultation. *We won't just end the consultation, we'll make sure you understand what you need to do next on your own to build on your academic expertise. We sometimes refer to this step as creating a road map of your next steps.*
18. Invite the student to return to the WC|TS; schedule a follow-up consultation. *Goes full circle back to one. We want you to feel comfortable and ready to come back.*
19. Use tone and body language to facilitate learning. *We get excited to help you learn. As we do, we may nod, lean in, smile, show them you're paying attention. We'll also work to be comfortable with silence (goes back to 13) so that you can take the time you need to answer our questions or learn the material.*
20. Be a co-learner and rhetorical/cultural informant. Avoid roles of editor and authority. *We will regularly ask you to explain any concepts/ terminology with which we're unfamiliar. We won't assume we have the same educational experiences or life ones, either. When we're both stumped, we'll work to figure out solutions together.*
21. Model strategies to find answers and to solve problems. Be willing to say, "I don't know." Don't pretend expertise. *Don't worry; our tutors aren't expected to know everything. Rather, what they need to be able to do is help you find answers to their questions.*
22. After the consultation, write detailed session notes of work done and recommendations for what to do next as well as a reflection on what you thought of the conference. *We will only share these notes with your professor if you request that we inform him, her, or them of your visit.*