

# First Meeting – Building Rapport & Setting the Stage

UALR TRIO Student Support Services – Tutoring Services  
INITIAL MEETING BETWEEN TUTOR AND STUDENT | PREPARATION FOR PROVIDING TUTORING SERVICES

Getting to know each other. What a lovely thought. We all want to get to know those with whom we work. In a tutoring situation, this building of rapport figures even more prominently, for one foundation pillar of a successful tutoring experience is the tutor knowing the student's individual and unique needs. To do so, one has to get to know the student: their personality, strengths, weaknesses, educational experiences, expectations, hopes, challenges, successes, and more. The key? Ask questions – then listen.

It is beneficial to use a systematic and organized approach when first meeting with a student. Use the initial dialogue to glean as much information about the student, course, instructor, and schedule as possible, setting the stage for a smooth tutoring experience for both tutor and student.

Here are a few questions to explore a student's mind and wealth of life experience in order to know how best to support them in their study activities.

## **A useful checklist: Getting to know the individual**

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1. What is your student status (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)?
2. **What is your major?**
3. What is your minor, if you have one?
4. When do you anticipate graduating?
5. **Have you taken any courses in this subject area before?**
  - a. How did you do grade-wise in previous courses of a similar subject?
  - b. Are you interested in the subject of this course (being tutored)?
  - c. What were your strengths in the course?
  - d. What were your weaknesses?
  - e. What kinds of challenges did you have in this subject?
6. If this is an online course, how do you feel about that?
  - a. Have you taken an online course before?
  - b. How did you do grade-wise in your previous online-course experience?
  - c. What did you like about taking an online course?
  - d. What challenges did you have with taking an online course?
7. Have you taken a course before under the instructor who is teaching your current course?
  - a. What did you like about the teaching style of the instructor?
  - b. What was challenging about the teaching style of the instructor?
  - c. How did you self-accommodate to get the most out of the class despite any challenges?
  - d. How did you do grade-wise in the course with the same instructor you have now in the course being tutored?
8. Who are the cheerleaders in your life rooting for you to succeed in your educational efforts?
9. What was one of the best experiences you have had in school?
10. Have you had any bad experiences in school that affect how you view your studies?
11. **What is your learning style?**
12. What is your class schedule?
13. What is your study schedule?
14. Where do you study?
15. **When do you study most effectively alone, with another, in a group?**
16. When do you want to schedule tutoring sessions each week (for the entire semester)?
17. **Have you ever been tutored before?**
  - a. In what subject(s) were you tutored?
  - b. How did you do grade-wise in the subject(s) you were tutored?
  - c. What did your previous tutor(s) do/say that was very helpful to you?
  - d. What did your previous tutor(s) do/say that was not helpful or even counterproductive for you?
18. **What are your expectations of tutoring for this course?**

Besides getting to know a student's personality, educational experiences, learning style preferences, and study habits, a tutor should also be well-informed about the schedule for a course and the instructor expectations of the students in the class. This will allow the tutor to support the student's efforts to meet the expectations and track progress throughout the semester.

### **A useful checklist: Getting to know the course**

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1. Request the student bring you a copy of the syllabus for each course being tutored to the initial meeting.
2. Request the student bring their textbook and other materials to be used for each course to be tutored to the initial meeting, if possible.
3. Review each syllabus with the student with the textbook and a calendar at-hand, drawing the student's attention the following important information (use questions, and have them identify the answers). Have the student notate important dates in their daily calendar-of-choice, and support them in anticipating these important dates as the semester unfolds by asking them questions about their preparedness.
  - a. What chapters will be covered each class period and/or week throughout the semester?
  - b. What is the main theme of each chapter?
  - c. When are quizzes and exams to be held?
  - d. What chapters and/or material will each quiz and exam cover?
  - e. What homework will be due when, and over what chapters and/or material?
  - f. What is the attendance policy for the course?
  - g. How are grades calculated for the course?
  - h. Will the student be provided a mid-term grade?
  - i. What are the instructor's office hours and where is s/he located?
4. Request the student bring textbooks, class notes, and any other study materials to each tutoring session for reference during discussions about problems areas and to use as sources for finding answers to student questions. Students should add thoughts gleaned from discussions with the tutor to their class notes to further clarify information for future review and study during private study times.
5. If the student has a disability, has s/he already made arrangements for support through the Disability Resource Center (DRC)? (Only ask about this if the student discloses to you they have a disability, tells you they are working with someone in DRC, and/or shares personal information related to their disability.)

PLEASE REMEMBER: All information a student shares should be respected as personal and confidential, and should not be shared with anyone, except SSS staff members, when necessary.

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### **TUTORS**

Please remind students they will be expected to:

- Attend all classes and read all assigned text material
- Take notes or arrange for a note-taker in class with the Disability Resource Center (DRC)
- Attempt and complete all homework on their own
- Do all research and draft all papers on their own
- Attempt and complete all quizzes, tests, and major exams on their own (or with DRC accommodations)
- Prepare and bring questions for the tutor for information to be worked on during regularly-held sessions
- **Use some of the tutoring time during the semester as "Teach the Tutor" time**