

# Role of a Peer Tutor

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The primary role of the tutor is to offer assistance with academic skills, subjects, and courses by helping the tutee “learn how to learn” on his or her own. You are a facilitator, a coach, and you are empowering students to help themselves. Tutors do not give answers, but help the tutees learn to find answers for themselves. Tutors, of course, do answer some questions directly, but in doing so they model the appropriate thinking and language behavior for the particular subject. You are a resource for other students, someone who can assist tutees with developing problem solving and decision making skills, and finding alternative resources. You also assist students who seek help with improving their self-confidence, which is a key factor in improving academic performance.

Peer tutors should have proficiency and demonstrated knowledge in the subjects they tutor. Students who come for tutoring are struggling with a problem they cannot solve. The role of the tutor is not to do the homework problems, but to assist students to understand concepts and processes in order that he or she can then leave the Center and complete their homework on their own.

Tutor should guide the students through the process of learning to find their own answers. Tutors as “model students” should be helping tutees become “master students.” Tutors also help provide an open environment in which learning can take place. Tutors determine the level at which a student is struggling: Does this student understand the basic concepts? Does this student understand the vocabulary of the subject? Tutors recognize that they have to work on a student’s level of understanding in order to help the student reach the tutor’s level of understanding. If the student needs to understand basic concepts before going further, the tutor will spend time on the basics.

Learning problems often come from not being able to relate the immediate problem to prior knowledge. That process requires the learner to organize information into meaningful patterns. Tutors understand that learning is a process of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Part of the reason that peer tutoring is so successful is because students can often relate better to each other than to their instructors. Tutees trust their tutors.

## Ethics

1. Never comment on a tutee’s grade. Keep your comments about grading policies and instructors positive and encouraging.
2. Do not offer false hope or empty flattery – be honest with your tutees while building their self-confidence.
3. Have the courage to admit your own weaknesses and seek assistance where appropriate.
4. Maintain confidentiality in the tutoring relationship.
5. Do not do the work for the student, but help them learn strategies for finding the answer.
6. Ensure that your tutee(s) has a clear understanding of your role in *supplementing* the class, not *substituting* for it.
7. Try not to speculate on grades (e.g., “You’ll definitely get an A in this course...”).