

Tutoring and Active Listening Techniques or "How to Get Your Tutee to Talk More Than You"

TEN SECOND RULE

After asking a question or follow up question, or beginning a problem, try to allow ten seconds for the student to respond. This may seem like a long time, but if you are patient, often the student will have time to think of a response. The purpose of this is to slow down the tutor and let the student know the tutor is listening and expects him or her to participate, not put pressure on the student.

PUTTING DOWN THE PENCIL

As a tutor, try working without a pencil or pen, in order to force the *tutee* to write and be more active. Make sure the paper or book is in front of the tutee, not the tutor.

ECHOING/ACTIVE LISTENING

Often a distortion develops between what a speaker intends to say and what a listener actually hears. To improve communication and help a student clarify what her or she is trying to say, a tutor should use "active listening" reflect or restate what he or she has just heard.

Examples: "I heard you say...Am I right?" "Are you saying that..." "In other words.."

PROBING

Probing can be useful for helping a student understand reading assignments, prepare to write, review a concept for a test or quiz, or for conversation in a foreign language or ESL. A probing response forces the tutor to listen carefully, and pushes the student to think and move beyond the first statement.

- ***Clarifying*** Asking a student for more information or meaning, restate
Examples: "What do you mean by that?" "Tell me more!" "Be more specific." "Anything else?" "So what's an example of that?"
- ***Challenging*** Asking a student to justify, reflect, or think about answer
Examples: "What are you assuming?" "How can that be?" "How would you do that?" "Are you sure?"
- ***Refocusing*** Asking a student to relate answer to another idea or topic
Examples: "How is that related to..." "If this were true, then what would happen if..."
- ***Prompting*** Giving a student a hint, or rephrasing a question to help lead to the answer after a student has tried and failed to understand
Examples: "Let me put it another way..." "Here's a clue..." "So what's the first step?" "Remember when we talked about..."
- ***Requesting Summary*** Asking for a restatement of what has just been said or learned, in terms of content and process.
Examples: "OK, now you explain back to me what we just said." "Now you teach it to me."
"Summarize the steps for me."

MODELING A THOUGHT PROCESS/BREAKING A TASK INTO PARTS (Metacognition)

Modeling can be useful for solving problems in math and science, doing grammar exercises, teaching study skills, studying for a test, reading a textbook, or revising a paragraph.

1. First, ask the student how he or she would approach the problem. Look in the book and class notes. S/he may not realize how much s/he already knows.
Examples: "What did you learn in class?" "How would you start this?" "Then what would you do?"
2. Next, model your own processes for the task by thinking *out loud* as you SLOWLY do the task.
Examples: "Hmmm, what do I do now?" "I usually begin by..." "Then I figure out if..."
3. Do another example together slowly, step by step, asking the student what to do for each step.
4. Have the student do the task alone, observing, giving encouragement, and coaching him or her along the way.
Examples: "Good, keep going!" "Remember what you do next..." "Do you want to write down the steps so you can remember them?"
5. Finally, fade into the background and let the student take on responsibility for the task.
Examples: "Great! Now you can do it on your own!" "Show me how you will do this when you are studying this by yourself"

Group Tutoring Techniques: Warm Up! Wake Up! Play a Game!

For more ideas, see [http://faculty.deanza.edu/alvesdelimadiana/stories/storyReader\\$342](http://faculty.deanza.edu/alvesdelimadiana/stories/storyReader$342)

Name Bounce

To help you and the group members know and use each other's names, conduct informal quizzes and "name games" during the first meetings. Then, once students have become somewhat familiar with each other's names, use the "name bounce" game described below to encourage group-centered, rather than leader-centered discussions and problem solving.

At some point during a session, call out "name bounce" and say the name of a student in the group. That student must then call on another by name, and that person must call on another, and so on. Repetition is OK, but try to ensure that every one eventually gets called. Push students to go as fast as they can to create a sense of momentum and fun. Allow students to "cheat" by helping each other. This activity helps them look to each other for answers, instead of always looking of the group leader. You might have students "name bounce" each other to answer questions, quiz each other, or give opinions during group discussions. Or, crumple up a piece of paper and have students toss it to one another during a discussion or question-answer session. Whoever catches the wad must ask or answer a question.

Index Card Questions

At the beginning of the session, hand out index cards to each student and have them write down three questions that they find from the textbook chapter, from lecture notes, or from class handouts. Then have them trade cards and answer each others' questions as a whole group. You might break up the material, and assign each individual or pair a specific topic. You can also make this into a game, or do it in pairs. This is a good technique to prepare for an exam.

Scribe Notes

At the beginning of each session, appoint (or ask for a volunteer) to take notes on the discussion. The notes can be informal, funny, or serious, and should include all the information the note-taker thinks is important. At the beginning of the next session, have the note-taker read his or her notes. This promotes "group memory" and helps connect current topics to previously covered material.

Board Notes

Try to make good use of the chalk board or white board during discussions. Whenever possible, have a group member write or draw on the board to illustrate concepts. Seeing material displayed on the board helps visual learners, writing or drawing on the board helps kinesthetic learners, and the process of summarizing information models effective learning strategies.

Team Debate/Quiz

Divide the group into two teams and use a quiz or game show format to have team members ask and answer course-related questions posed by the opposing team. Have the teams consult for a few minutes to develop their list of questions before playing the game. Make sure everyone agrees on the rules, then keep score.

Freewriting

Begin a session by having students write for three minutes on a topic related to course material. Potential topics include how they applied specific learning strategies during the last week, their thoughts on a specific concept covered in lecture and readings, what questions they have for this session, or any other topic that might help focus their minds on the discussion to follow. Tell them to write as much as they can, as fast as they can, without worrying about grammar, spelling, or sentence structure. They do not have to share their writing unless they want to. The goal is to have students focus their energy and clear their minds so that they can concentrate better during the discussion.

Process Summary

One goal of group tutoring is to provide students with the necessary confidence and skills to eventually initiate and conduct their own study groups for their other courses. By focusing attention on group process, students can become more conscious of how to lead these groups. Though it may seem awkward to discuss these questions at first, in time group members will become more comfortable taking risks within the group and taking responsibility for the group's success.

About five minutes before the end of a session, stop the discussion. Ask the group to summarize the process they just went through. Use the following questions to get the discussion started:

- How and when did the group begin to discuss the material?
- Who talked and who did not?
- Did the discussion stay on track or did it stray into less important topics?
- Did students refer to and help each other or did they try to get the group leader to answer all the questions?
- Overall, was the discussion productive and fun? If so, why? If not, what can be done next time to improve it? Have someone write these suggestions down and remind everyone of them at the next group meeting.

If students seem shy about discussing these issues, have everyone in the group to either freewrite about the group or write down some observations about the group process. You might ask them to write two or three positive observations, and two or three areas for improvement. At the next meeting, use these comments to lead a more focused discussion.

Rotating Leader

When you begin to know the students in your group, invite one of them to lead the discussion. Point out that the most important role of a leader lies not in mastery of course content, but in the ability to include the whole group in a focused and productive discussion. You might want to sit down with the student leader for a few minutes before the session and help him or her think of some questions to guide the discussion. During the session, resist the urge to jump in; just sit back and let the group take over. A few minutes before the end of the session, stop the discussion and ask for feedback about how the session went.