

# Learning to Teach

In Response to My Three Questions

by Annie H, a math tutor

Tutoring math at De Anza has been a new experience for me. I had tutored younger children before, but it was not comparable to this 8 hr/week job in which I was working with students my age or older. Through the tutoring course, I've learned various ways to address the learning habits of my tutees and adapt more to their needs as students. There were also topics that we discussed in tutoring class that I had no idea about, for example, students with learning disabilities. At the start of tutoring, I definitely had many questions running through my head, but now that I am more experienced, I can answer those questions and even suggest advice to new tutors have similar questions. Looking back on the quarter, I'd say that tutoring was a demanding job for me: I had to be prepared to answer questions, organize myself, be patient, and learn my tutees' strengths and weaknesses, but it was also rewarding to help students. Perhaps my reflection of my quarter tutoring can help others.

What is the best way to get yourself organized, as a tutor? Now that I have had almost a quarter of tutoring experience, I would answer that you try to should set up two appointments with your tutee per week and try to keep those same times throughout the quarter. This way, you and your tutee can expect to see each other at the same time, and it will be easier to remember to go to the tutor session for the both of you. For example, when I had to change my appointment due to a doctor's appointment, one of my tutees did not come at the right time. Logically, it is a good idea to schedule your sessions regularly. Also, I made a table for myself, like the one that was given to the tutors, and filled out the schedule with my class times and tutoring times, so that I would be prepared to make appointments. In regards to the individual tutoring sessions, I find that the [Tutoring Cycle](#) is extremely useful in setting up an organized approach to tutoring. I first asked my tutee what they were going over, what they had the most problems with and how they were feeling about the class overall. We went over that, then went over the current material together, did sample problems, and then summarized the information that we went over together. At first, I paraphrased what we went over together, but later on I found that asking the tutee to summarize the information is better because it makes them think about what they did. The summary is also a way to refresh the tutees' mind before the session is over. Another good idea is to ask the student to make a copy of his or her syllabus so that you can know when they are going to have quizzes or midterms and what they are going to be covering throughout the quarter.

What are the best methods to teach students? I think that this generally depends on the student. However, I find that most learn well by going over key concepts and then doing sample problems directly related to those concepts. By applying the concepts with a "hands on approach", the tutees can ask questions about what they don't understand about the ideas. They can see the manifestation of the theory by working on the problems. Most of my tutees were visual learners, and I tried to stimulate their visual perception by using graphs or tables to help them organize the data. Also, I find that tutees learn well by going through problems step by step. Many times, they want to jump through material without understanding each step, so when we have tutoring sessions together, I make sure they go slowly and not try to rush through the material. Also, one tutor brought up the fun learning videos that are made for many subjects,

which I did not try, but they did look really interesting and informative.

What is the problem that you encounter the most? I'd say that the biggest problem I have with my tutees is that because I started tutoring a month late (I was hired because someone else dropped), many of my tutees got very behind and never ended catching up. They did do better with the tutoring, but one of my tutees was so behind, that he ended up dropping the course. Next time, I'd want all my tutees to start at the beginning of the quarter and make sure not to fall behind. Another problem, I've encountered is when I couldn't answer a specific question about conexas. That section of hyperbolas and ellipses was always difficult for me, and when I got to them with Vanessa, it was hard for me to explain them to her. So, I went to her instructor's office hours to ask him about it, and later was able to explain it to Vanessa more clearly and answer her questions.

I had a good experience tutoring math at De Anza and am happy to share my "wisdom" with anyone who has questions about tutoring. It is a hard job but surely a rewarding one.