Dear future tutors,

Please let me briefly introduce myself at first. I am a new tutor this quarter and a current student in EWRT 97 class. I major in psychology because of my interest in the fields of biology and social science (it is not because I want to guess what people think), and it has been my second year in De Anza, which means I am leaving next year. I don’t know whether English is your first language, but I am sure that your interest or even passion about this language led to your decision to become tutors. As for me, English is not my first language but is definitely my favorite foreign language. Though I started as an ESL student in De Anza, I have never given up my love toward English, so when I proceeded to the college-level English classes, it occurred to me that I could help others learn this language and improve myself as well. However, I have never expected to learn that much from the EWRT 97 class and the tutoring sessions, and the process of becoming a real tutor step by step is simply amazing.

I am glad to know you are planning to be a tutor, and I hope my experience in both the training class and the tutoring sessions can be helpful to you. First of all, like many people who enjoy using English, I can understand the grammar rules but I had difficulty explaining them to others before becoming a tutor. In this class, I learned several techniques and have tried to apply them to my tutoring sessions. For instance, I found it rather useful to ask specific questions about time to help my tutees identify their problems with tenses. When they were confused about certain usage of words and sentence patterns, it is important to give example sentences or even correct the first problem to set as an example.

Moreover, I learned tutors are supposed to take the tutee’s cultural background into consideration when tutoring. For example, tutors should be generous when giving positive feedback because most of tutees lack the confidence when they bring their work to you, but people from certain cultural background may not be comfortable with being praised explicitly, so always using words like “perfect” or “wonderful” might not be a good idea. In this case, we as tutors need to be careful about the tutees’ responses to our feedback. If you find it difficult to communicate with your tutees or are confused by their responses, I will suggest that you relate this problem to your tutees’s cultural background and consult people from the same culture.

Organizing a tutoring session is another major aspect of tutoring that I have learned a lot about. Since the tutoring time is limited, I am usually not able to address all the problems but need to have certain priority. The content and organization of an essay always goes before the grammar issues as they make up the framework of the essay. After that, the global issues, including tenses and sentence-level mistakes, should get the attention before the local issues, such as misspelling.

Although you may think tutoring is merely a job, I hope you can discover more value in it and find it rewarding just like how I feel now. You will definitely learn a lot of tutoring techniques, but I hope you can not only learn but also try applying various techniques to your tutoring sessions and observe your tutees’ responses to them. Thus, you will be able to use different techniques with different kinds of tutees. What’s more, maintaining an open and cooperative attitude toward others is very helpful. It is certain that you are going to meet with instructors, supervisors, your peer tutors and many different types of people besides your tutees, and cooperation, such as being responsive and participating in the class, will absolutely improve your tutoring skills and make this experience more meaningful.

Furthermore, I have felt and I am pretty sure you will feel touched by the fact that we tutors might be the only group of people some tutees can use English with except for their professors. As they are immigrants living in communities that are culturally and linguistically exclusive, these tutees really treasure the opportunity to learn from us. You may find it harder to tutor this kind of tutee than the others, but please be patient with them, show your passion about English to them and encourage them to learn this language. Your effort can contribute to their adaptation to their new life in this country.

On top of that, I have learned and hope you can realize it as well after taking the tutoring class: tutors should always bear it in their minds that their responsibility is not editing their tutees’s papers. Instead, it is crucial to guide the tutees to identify their problems and help them come up with corrections,
so that the tutees can have a chance to learn rather than just have their papers edited. We should always teach them fishing skills but not just give them the fish, which will make them starve when they are not with us.

I believe you will gain a great deal of knowledge in the class and both you and your tutees will benefit from tutoring sessions. Keep up with your passion and hard work!

Regards,