Dear newbie,

Welcome aboard! This is going to be one nerve wrecking, yet extremely fulfilling journey! I was just like you a few months ago, filled with anticipation and the strong eagerness in tutoring. But before you embark on this journey, I have a few things I would like to share with you.

Tutoring…where do I even begin? EWRT 97 was evidently the first step to this tutoring job and it definitely helped me get prepared. I learned so much from not only the materials given, but also from both Ken and Diane, and the tutors who were taking this class as well. EWRT 97 certainly served as a stepping-stone and taught me how to take baby steps one at a time. It also helped take me back to simple grammar rules, tenses rules, and subject-verb agreements, most of which are very new to ESL students.

During most of the time in class, we would be learning about strategies we could use during our tutoring sessions. Also, we were given a few general guidelines regarding what should and should not be done during a tutoring session. One of the more important things I’ve learned in this class was, “Suggest, but do not enforce”. A lot of tutors including myself tend to go crazy with our correction skills at times, since the art of helping is limitless. While suggesting, I’ve learned to always say, “I think that this might be a better way”, instead of directly stating, “You should change this to that”. As tutors, we are here to help students by providing comments and suggestions, but not firmly indicating our point of view and in return, forcing them to fully change their ideas.

Aside from that, cultural competence is something all tutors (including you!) must strongly take into account. As you may have already noticed, De Anza College is a well-diverse school. Students come from all over the world. Different countries share different mannerisms. Therefore, as a tutor, always be wary of what you say and do, as you may not want to come off as insensitive and rude. Speaking of different cultures, it automatically drives us to the point where different tutees have different personalities, just like you and me. Do take that into consideration, as not all tutees share the same
tutoring style preference. During EWRT 97, we learned many ways on adapting to different tutees and at most times, handling them individually.

Before EWRT 97, I had absolute no clue on how a tutoring session should go about. I didn’t know how it was supposed to begin or end. I wasn’t sure what to prioritize on and what to do when in great doubt. EWRT 97 was able to teach me everything about structuring your tutoring session and what to specifically do along the way. I learned to always plan ahead, especially on how long I should focus on my tutee’s assignment and what to do when I personally can’t answer to his/her questions. The WRC has great resources we can turn to, ranging from the support staffs to the seniors tutors and handouts, all of which I have consistently put into good use. So definitely, you’ll be well equipped before going about with your sessions.

I always believe in making the best out of whatever you are given with, be it good or bad. No matter what the experience turns out to be like, it is still something that you will always remember and be thankful for. A suggestion I would give to you is: to be open-minded. Being open-minded doesn’t mean that you have to be carefree in any sense, but rather to accept and try to adapt to various situations. Expect to have a great time tutoring, but also do keep in mind that there are days when things don’t go both you and your tutee’s way. Patience is one of the most crucial tools that you will need during your tutoring sessions. Losing your cool will not only determine your professionalism, but in a way, your passion in teaching. Besides that, I’ve come to learn that it’s not always your fault when you can’t deliver an explanation well, or when your tutee receives a bad grade on his/her paper. Everything happens for a reason and mistakes aid in improving. If you give and do your best, the rest will work itself out!

Good luck with tutoring and I hope that you will come to love it as much as I do!

Best Regards,

Shien-Min Teo