

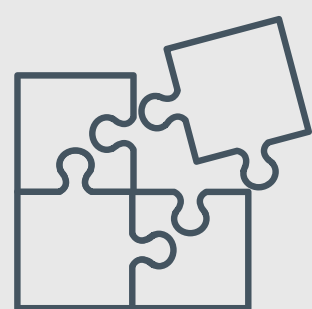
TUTORS & DEMONSTRATORS

Quick Tips and Resources for Effective Tutoring

Discussion based tutorials

REMEMBER THE CONTEXT

Your session is part of a whole, and though it may seem very significant to you it may only be a smaller part of the whole for your students. Ensure you know how your tutorials fit in with the larger whole of the course, and make sure it is relevant to your students. Think, what is the purpose and context of the tutorial?



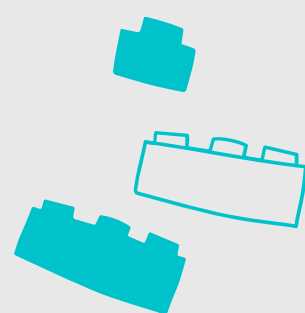
STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING

Tutorials are about student-centered learning, and requires that students get actively involved in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning. Tutors should place greater importance on what their learners are doing, and why they are doing it, rather than on their own actions and performances as a teacher. Students will bring different experiences, knowledge and understanding to the class, and may have a range of (mis)conceptions already. Think about your students and what they can bring to your class, then think about how you best can teach them.



THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF HELP

When answering questions, be careful not to give them too much help or answer the question for them. Find out what they know and ask them to explain their thinking or approaches. Guide them towards alternative viewpoints and solutions.



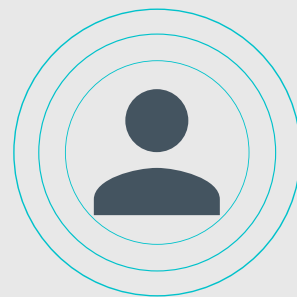
USE GROUPS

Use small groups to get students talking and to share ideas. This also helps with encouraging engagement and puts less pressure on individuals to provide answers. Give students time to think about the topic independently first so that they can contribute to a group discussion more effectively.



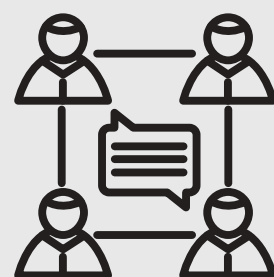
DON'T SINGLE OUT

If asking for contributions from participants, do not call on individuals spontaneously if they are not expecting it, as this can increase anxiety. Ask for volunteers or agree with individuals in advance to share their ideas. Consider if there are ways you can share ideas and opinions anonymously, e.g. through post-its or online tools. If students are working in groups, assign reporters ahead of time or ask them to self nominate someone.



ENGAGE EVERYONE

Don't concentrate on one particularly vocal group or individual, gently bring in any shy people by encouraging peer support or small group discussions. Remember that online students will also need individual support so make sure you monitor individual engagement and needs as you would in the classroom.



YOU ARE A ROLE MODEL

Though tutorials can seem like a relaxed space, be mindful of your own professional conduct. You are a role model as a tutor, so model professional attitudes and behaviours.



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A RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

A large part of discussion based tutorials is to learn from each others experiences and to share viewpoints. Cultivate an environment where everyone's viewpoints can be heard and will be [respected](#). If interacting online, consider co-creating a set of [netiquette guidelines](#) to build a respectful online environment.



CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

If discussing controversial topics you may need to consider how students can contribute their viewpoints without the fear of confrontation. Consider using role play as a way to assign viewpoints for debate, or find a way to share viewpoints anonymously e.g. with post-its or using online tools.



SENSITIVE TOPICS

If discussing sensitive topics you will need to consider how it may affect your students. Consider if you can provide additional support to those who need it, or tell them where they can find it. Know your limits and refer them on to other [support services](#) if needed.



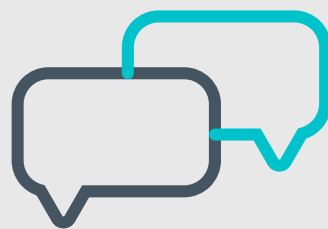
MAKE CONNECTIONS

Making connections to the rest of the course and to the real world can help students to understand the reason for what they are doing. Share how you apply the ideas and concepts to your own research, and share your enthusiasm for the subject. Bring in your own knowledge and experiences if relevant.



BE HONEST

Tutors don't have to know about a specific topic to run a tutorial about it, but can guide students through the various challenges of academic learning and writing. Tutorials are for collective learning. It is important to convey this general purpose, as well as your own perceived purpose, to your students. This will help them understand why you are teaching the ways you chose to, and encourage a heightened degree of participation



BE KIND

Your students may be new to discussion based tutorials. Be kind and understanding if students don't seem to be engaging as much as you'd like. Take the time to understand why. Try not to get frustrated.



Resources

[Tuts & Dems Handbook - Chapter 3: Tutorials in Arts and Social Sciences](#)

[IAD Learn Resources - Teaching Open Discussion Classes](#)

[Top tips for the first few weeks - University of Nebraska-Lincoln](#)

[Facilitating Effective Discussions - University of Waterloo](#)

[Small groups discussion strategies - Washington University in St. Louis](#)

[If you are doing this online, see our Teaching Online Infographic](#)