

There's Gold in Them Thar' Minds

(Or, How to Get the Most Out of Your Tutor)

Welcome to San Antonio College's Student Learning Assistance Center (or SLAC). You will derive many benefits from participating in the SLAC's learning activities. First, you will achieve more academic success in your classes. Second, you will meet some nice people who enjoy helping others. Third, you will "learn the ropes" as you improve your study skills. Fourth, these benefits are offered without cost-but they are not free! Getting the most out of tutoring is a bit like prospecting for gold. The gold doesn't cost you, but you do have to expend some effort to find it. Now that you have been assigned a tutor, it's a good idea to focus on getting the most out of this experience. The following suggestions will assist you in gathering as much gold as possible.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST SESSION

First, your tutor will need to know your goals, needs and concerns regarding your course, so give it some thought ahead of time. Knowing exactly what you expect from a tutor is important. Second, bring with you all of your course 'materials' --texts, syllabus or course outline, your lecture notes, assigned study guides, etc. While your tutor has been selected for their knowledge of the course, being able to examine these materials will provide them with insight into what your particular instructor is emphasizing. Third, since each of us learns in slightly different ways, you might want to read and complete the Study Guide on "Learning Styles. " This survey will provide both you and your tutor with valuable insights into how you can best learn materials.

DURING YOUR FIRST SESSION

First, be prepared to spend a little time getting acquainted before getting down to business. It is important that both you and your tutor feel comfortable before focusing on the academic concerns. Relax and be yourself! Remember that your tutor is your peer, a fellow student, who has strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, goals and fears, just as you do. Second, discuss your tutorial goals. Be honest in expressing your needs and concerns. Your tutor may suggest that you read some SLAC Study Aids or complete some exercises in order to better understand you and be able to help you. Finally, you and your tutor should set some specific goals for your next session before parting.

AS YOU CONTINUE YOUR SESSIONS

First, be sure to attend class, take notes and do your assignments to the best of your ability. Regular class attendance is critical. It allows you to identify your instructor's emphases. Taking notes is also critical-especially for students with various learning styles. Working on out-of-class assignments -- whether assigned readings or exercises -- is also important. These assignments will assist you in learning materials and in identifying specific problem areas to discuss with your tutor.

Second, come to each tutoring session with specific questions about specific exercises or assignments, which are bothering you. Since the tutoring session is not just another class period, it is important that you and your tutor have a focus.

Third, don't be afraid to ask questions. Your tutor cannot help if he or she doesn't know where you're having problems. Be as open and honest with your tutor as you would with your doctor. And besides, a questioning mind is an active mind.

Fourth, play an active role in this relationship. Keep your tutor on his or her toes! Don't sit back and wait to be spoon-fed. Your tutor is not going to do your work for you, but will act as your guide through the coursework and will help you learn study skills, which you can apply in this class as well as all your classes.

Finally, remember that you have entered into a partnership, which can benefit you greatly. But, if, after a number of sessions, it becomes apparent for whatever reason that you're not profiting from the tutoring, then please tell your tutor. This will open the door for discussion. Perhaps some suggestions from another party can help. There may be other options; Remember, the primary goal of the SLAC staff is to help you!

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