**AUCA Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC)**

What Tutors Do (and What they Don’t Do)

What is the Role of a Tutor?

Peer tutors may be best understood as a friendly second set of eyes. They will notice things that need noticing and help you re-visit answers and choices in your writing and math assignments that merit revision. Peer tutors are students who have completed at least one year at AUCA and have been nominated by faculty in a particular field. They have been trained in workshops and will take a semester long course to work with peers and to support their learning. It might be easiest to see what a tutor does by considering what tutors *don’t* do:

* peer tutors won’t do your homework for you
* peer tutors won’t proofread your paper for you
* peer tutors won’t make sure your assignment gets an A

Rather, a tutor will work with you to make sure you understand the content of the course, or in the case of a writing tutor, they will help you figure out what the next step is for your current draft and how you might get there. For example, a writing tutor may help you brainstorm a list of possible thesis statements, help you decide which is most promising, and then work with you as you develop your arguments; a math tutor might help you review a particular step in your work and help you see and articulate where you are having a problem in order to understand and correct it. In each case, the role of the tutor is to support students doing their work.

Isn’t Tutoring for Struggling Students?

For professional writers, getting the opinion of a second reader is an essential part of any writing process; likewise, in the sciences, peer review is an important part of developing ideas and sharpening insights. There is nothing remedial about tutoring. *Learning to incorporate the constructive and supportive input from a peer is an essential part of becoming a sophisticated thinker.* In practice, many of our tutors themselves receive tutoring in another subject. For every student we’ll tutor who is feeling lost in a class, we’ll be tutoring at least two others who are getting B’s. Tutoring is about getting to the next level, whatever your current level may be.

Why Does My Tutor Ask So Many Questions?

Some students are surprised when their tutor, rather than giving them answers, starts to ask them questions. There may be times when a tutor does give an answer: a math tutor may explain how a particular function works, a language tutor may show you how to conjugate a verb, and a writing tutor may explain how a semi-colon or a thesis statement works. But this is just the beginning. *We are certain—based on research in the field and on our own anecdotal experience—that real learning begins when you yourself are asked to apply a new concept*. For example, after showing you how to conjugate a verb, a language tutor will ask you to look at the verbs in the rest of your essay to see if any need revision, or a math will ask you to complete a problem set on your own. In general, you’ll know your session is going well if you talk more than your tutor in a session.

What Happens in a Tutoring Session?

Tutoring sessions vary wildly from subject to subject. As mentioned above, the tutor may take some time to explain a particular point, but most of the session will be more interactive. Here are some common occurrences:

* Some sessions begin with a careful reading of the assignment
* A writing tutor may ask you to read part of your paper aloud, as experience shows that we often notice different things when we read our texts aloud
* Alternately, a writing tutor may read a paragraph aloud to you to see how it sounds and what you notice as a listener
* A tutor may ask you to explain how you came up with the answers to certain problems
* You might do some free writing to clarify an idea or develop some new ones
* You might look at a draft together and outline it to see how it is currently organized
* A tutor might look for mistakes you make more than once, explain the relevant rule, and then have you apply it to other paragraphs or problem sets

What Can I Do to Get the Most Out of My Tutoring Session?

The best sessions—the sessions where students make genuine progress—are those where the student and not the tutor takes the lead. Remember that this is *your* homework, *your* essay, *your* assignment. Think of your tutor as a resource to help you do your work, and be ready to re-think what you have done. For writing sessions, bring the assignment, any books you are using, and a hard copy of your current draft. Please don’t just bring your laptop. For math, bring your textbook, the work you’ve done and paper.

You shouldn’t expect your tutor to fix your paper or do your homework for you. If we did that, while your grade might improve, you’d be back next week with the exact same needs. Our goal is something deeper and longer lasting. What writing theorists such as Nancy Sommers, John Beam, and others say about writing tutors applies to tutoring of all kinds: “Fixing flawed papers is easy; showing students how to fix their own papers is complex and difficult.” At WARC, we invite you to join us in doing the hard work of learning together.

What if My Tutoring Session Went Really Badly?

Tutoring, like teaching or cooking or anything else we do, isn’t a perfect science. If a session goes badly, you can be sure your tutor noticed and is wondering why. If you think you know what went wrong—whether it was your doing or the tutor’s—you can raise this with the tutor. You can also choose to work with a different tutor next time. We always welcome tutor evaluations, which can be anonymous, but this does preclude us from following up with you. You can also bring your concerns to Aitalieva Anet, Writing and Academic Resource Center (WARC) Coordinator, at aitalieva\_a@auca.kg, or Mariya Antonova, Director of the WARC, at antonova\_m@auca.kg.

What if My Tutoring Session Went Really Well?

Let us know! Complete an evaluation form and mention your tutor’s name. Tutors work hard and appreciate knowing that their effort has had a positive impact.

For more information, or if you have any questions about the Center or tutoring, don’t hesitate to

contact us at [warc@auca.kg](mailto:warc@auca.kg) or visit us in Room #229.