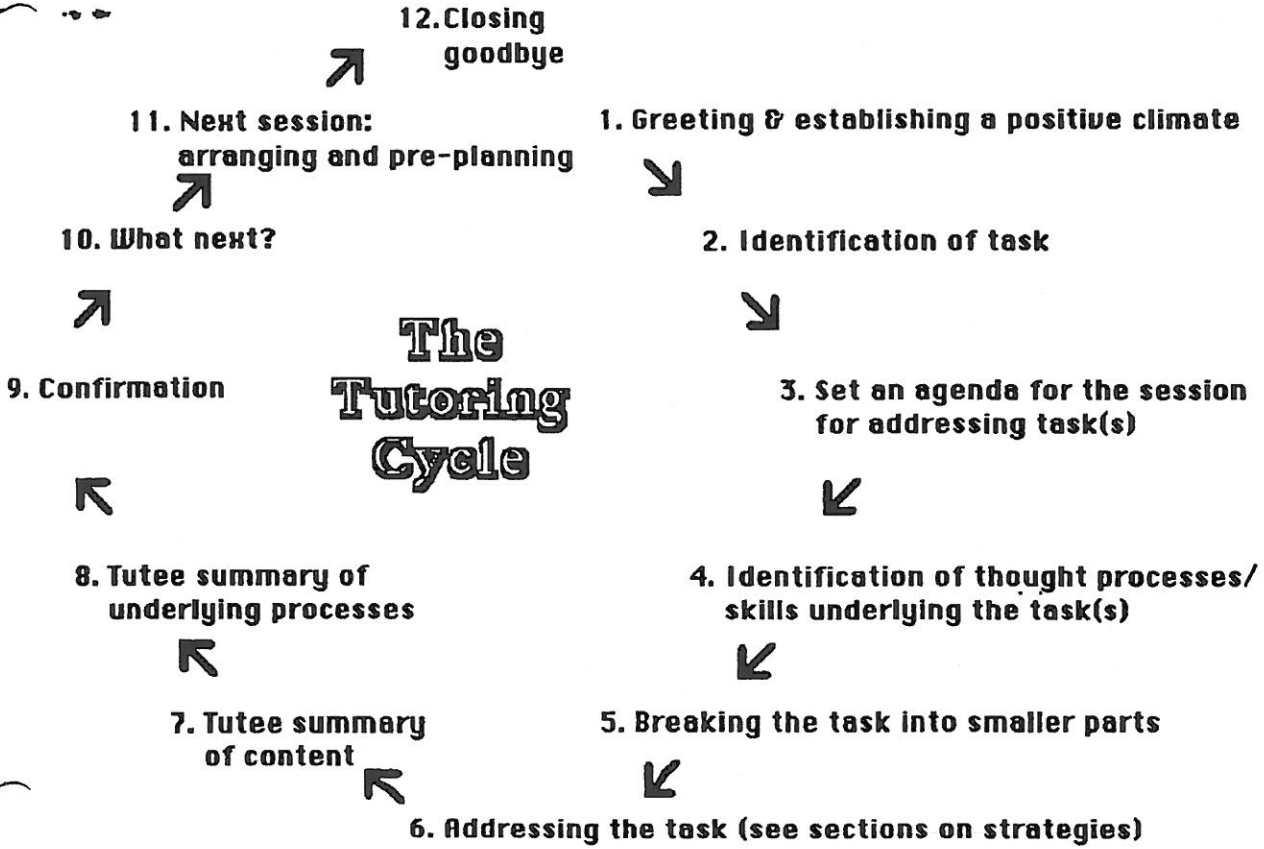


The Tutoring Cycle



Tutor ---->



<----Tutee/Learner

Handout 2-1

EXPLANATION OF THE TUTORING CYCLE

1. Greeting and Establishing a Positive Climate and Environment

At this stage the tutor greets the tutee, arranges physical seating, and sets a positive, task-directed atmosphere. The tutor needs to limit the social chit chat but set a positive working environment. For example, if the tutee seems nervous or ill at ease, the tutor may spend a few minutes talking with the tutee. On the other hand, if the tutee begins the session by expecting help with his personal problems, the tutor should acknowledge the problems but also remind the tutee that unless the tutoring session begins, the tutee may experience academic worries as well. Chairs, tables, books need to be arranged for maximum interaction and access to materials. The students' work (essay, text, worksheet, etc.) should be kept in front of the student and under his/her control. If someone is going to stand in front of a chalkboard and write, why shouldn't it be the student?

2. Identification of the Task

It is the responsibility of the tutee to identify the task, although the tutee will often try to get the tutor to do so. For example, the tutee may come to the session, and tell the tutor that she doesn't understand anything about the assignment. Through questioning, however, the tutor will be able to get the tutee to be specific about what she doesn't understand. "Tell me where you started to get confused."

3. Set an Agenda for the Session

Once the tutor and tutee know the task, they should set an informal agenda for the session. What they will do first, second, and so forth. As a result of setting the agenda, both tutor and tutee will know what to expect and can help to make it happen.

4. Identification of Thought Processes/Skills Underlying the Task

A tutee may seek help when he does not know how to do an assignment. The tutor needs to be able to show the tutee not only how to do the assignment, but how to do similar assignments. To accomplish this, the tutor must be able to help the tutee identify the procedure for addressing the task. For example, if the tutee is having difficulty solving word problems, the tutor will show the tutee general strategies for solving word problems, and apply them to the specific problem causing the difficulty.

5. Breaking the Task into Smaller Parts

Tutors may know the subject matter so well that they forget to break the task into smaller parts so the tutee may learn. For example, a tutee may be solve an algebra problem more easily if the tutor will break the problem into small steps, not moving on until each step has been mastered. The challenge, of course, is understanding what the tutee does and doesn't know and taking challenging but not impossible steps forward.

6. Addressing the Task

(See sections on Tutoring Talk and Tutoring Strategies)

7. Tutee Summary of Content

The tutee should be able to summarize the content of the material studied or problem solved, by paraphrasing what has been covered in the session. This is an important step which for many students occurs automatically when the student gets the idea. We might call it "the light bulb effect." At the moment a student realizes an idea, s/he will often launch into a spontaneous summary of that idea. If the tutee doesn't volunteer to do so, the tutor should make sure it happens. The tutor may receive a verbal or non-verbal acknowledgement from the tutee indicating an understanding. However, often a tutee may communicate that he understands when, in fact, he does not. The tutor may need to seek confirmation of the tutee's understanding by asking comprehensive questions that require more than a "yes" response.

8. Tutee Summary of Underlying Thought Processes

The tutee may understand what to do but fail to understand how to do it. Knowing what information to put in a blank in a worksheet is not the same as knowing how to do the kind of thinking to figure out what goes in that blank. It is important for the tutor to monitor the tutee's understanding of the underlying thought processes. This can be done by asking the tutee to verbalize the processes she uses to accomplish a specific task. For example, the tutor can say, "When we are given a word problem, the first step is to....., the next step is to.....," etc. Or "Explain how you would do this next problem." Or, "think of another similar problem and tell me how you would work it out." In general then the intent is to cause the tutee to paraphrase what s/he has learned, and apply the understanding to a related subject, while explaining how s/he is working out the answer.

9. Confirmation

The tutor needs to make sure that once the tutee has a good understanding of the task, that the tutor then reinforce this understanding. This is more than blanket praise. It is a reinforcement of the

content the tutee has learned and of the skills needed to do other similar problems. The desired outcome is that the tutee knows what the answers are, knows how those answers were arrived at and feels more confident about doing similar tasks without help.

10. What Next?

As the session nears a close, it is important for a tutor to encourage a tutee to think about and make plans for what they will be doing after the session is over. The tutor should be interested in promoting the tutee's on-going involvement with the material and to have occasions to study and learn independent of the structure of tutoring sessions.

11. Next Session Arranging and Pre-Planning

It may be wise for the tutor and tutee need to arrange for the day and time of their next meeting. This is especially true for those students who the tutor believes will need more assistance. Why not arrange it now? They also need to plan how they will use the next session. For example, by reviewing what they have covered in this session, they can read ahead, and construct questions that anticipate the text.

12. Closing: Goodbye

This is generally very short. Tutor and tutee thank each other, reinforce each other's efforts, and say goodbye.

Responsible Use of a Powerful Tool

As with any powerful tool, this curriculum can be used to produce positive benefits for your tutees, your tutors, and thus your program when one is adequately informed about how to use it. On the other hand, one could conceivably do damage to a tutoring program when one is not adequately informed about how to use it. It is our intent to make sure that any one who so desires has access to it AND it is our intent to try to help people understand how to use it properly. Please do not misunderstand. We don't think we are the "chosen elect" and everybody else the "great unwashed." Rather, we spent a great deal of time and effort conducting research and developing this curriculum and so we know that learning about it takes time, energy and careful thought. We urge to take the time and effort and give it the thought. We support you in your efforts to make tutoring on your campus as effective as it can be and we offer you our advice and encouragement. We also are very interested in learning about your experiences in implementing this curriculum so that we can continue to refine it. A list of participants, their addresses and phone numbers is included in this binder.

As mentioned already, this curriculum is imagined as only the beginning of what will be the efforts of many to continue to understand the tutoring process and to train tutors to be as effective as possible. Our commitment to educational quality demands these further efforts.

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