

It is critical that you observe how tutors structure sessions. As you work with experienced tutors, pay attention to how they employ each element of protocol in their work.

PART 1: BEGINNING THE SESSION

Prepare

Look up the name of your client on the scheduler. Using the Report System, check previous tutor reports on this client and consider how this information can help you approach your session.

- 1) If your client has been to the Center before, what was the most recent appointment? What was the goal and content of that appointment? Reason: in case the client plans to do further work with that paper.
- 2) Scan other previous reports for trends, patterns, and what was addressed in the session. Reason: so you can build on previous tutor work and encourage growth. Most importantly, so you do not contradict your colleagues or confuse clients with new language or strategies that might distract his/her progress.

EXAMPLE: Scenario: Gabriel brings in a complete first draft of his paper on agroecosystems.

Report: Gabriel came to the Writing Center to brainstorm ideas for his paper on agroecosystems. We began the session by reading the assignment and writing down the implicit and explicit questions it posed. Afterwards, we brainstormed answers for these questions and talked about how they related to each other. After we had explored some of these ideas, I asked Gabriel to formulate a thesis for his paper. I found he was not sure about what to include in his statement, so I explained some of the basic components and purposes of a thesis. Afterwards, we constructed a working thesis that Gabriel could use as a basis to review his ideas and start drafting his paper. Gabriel left the Writing Center with a working thesis statement, a list of ideas to guide background information research, and written reflections about using the thesis statement to answer assignment questions.

Notice: Gabriel's next tutor should expect that Gabriel has a solid understanding of the assignment and understands what a thesis is; moreover, the next tutor can anticipate that Gabriel will have finished researching and writing background information. Thus, during the session with Gabriel, the tutor will not try to review these concepts of steps unless he seems confused. Also, the tutor might be able to subtly reinforce those lessons from the earlier session by briefly referencing previous concepts: "Since your thesis directly answers the assignment's core questions, once we connect the topic sentences to your thesis, each one will automatically address part of the assignment."

Start on Time

The most frequent and consistent positive feedback we receive from clients is based on how welcome they felt, how friendly their tutor was, whether the tutor was waiting for them when they arrived, and that the appointment started on time. A good start is critical to a successful appointment.

Introduce Yourself and Shake His/Her Hand

Be professional and make your client comfortable. Look your client in the eyes, smile, shake his/her hand, and say, "Nice to meet you [client name]."

Check the Assignment Sheet to Ensure Your Client Has Filled out All Necessary Information

To complete a client report, you need all required information on the sign-in sheet. Before you start your appointment, check if all relevant fields on the sheet have been completed and ask the client for any missing information. If new to the Center, note if the client wants the report sent. You might want to discuss the advantages of having reports sent to professors.

Ask Your Client if He/She Has Been to the Center Before

If he/she has not, give him/her a brief orientation to the Center, including:

1. How to make an appointment.
2. Description of sessions we offer (brainstorming, outlining, restructuring, etc.).

3. Description of 45-minute appointment followed by client feedback form.

PART 2: SETTING A SESSION GOAL

Ask the Client Informational Questions

It is your job to orient yourself to the client's stage in the writing process, so ask the following questions! If it is helpful to you, please make a "cheat sheet" with a list of these questions to refer to at the beginning of every session.

- Do you have an assignment sheet with you?
- When is this assignment due?
- How much time do you have to put into this paper?
- Where are you in the process? What have you generated?
- How is it going so far?/Has anything slowed you down?/Has one part been harder to write than another?
- Do you have teacher comments?
- Have you revised it?
- What is your thesis? / What are you arguing? (then see if his/her answer matches the thesis in his/her paper)
- Do you have any specific questions or concerns?
- What do you want my help with most today?/What do you definitely want us to discuss before you leave today?

Review the Assignment Sheet

Often a student has completed his or her paper but has failed to meet all of the assignment's criteria. Helping the client evaluate if he/she has fully completed the assignment is critical (see Assessing the Assignment Module).

If the client does not have an assignment sheet, ask him/her what his/her understanding is of the assignment. Take notes as he/she explains. When writing your client report, be sure to note that the client did not have his/her assignment sheet, so you had to base your session on his/her understanding of the assignment, which was x.

Get a Sense of the Overall Argument, Structure, and Organization

Before you can truly help a client, you must understand the overarching argument or plan. No matter what stage of the writing process their draft is in, help them plan, check, or revise for global issues by anticipating or answering questions like these: Are claims effectively structured and organized? Are there clear topic sentences? Is evidence introduced, analyzed, and cited? Do the introduction and conclusion paragraphs contextualize and add relevancy to the argument?

Tutors employ numerous strategies to ask and answer these kinds of questions; however, effective strategies typically include a visual element, result in written work, and have steps that can be followed again. For example, depending on what you and your client have prioritized, you may teach them to ask the 5 W's and How when developing an idea. You may underline key words in the thesis and the topic sentences to check that the argument is developed throughout the paper and that the assignment requirements have been met. You may paraphrase each piece of evidence to interrogate whether it supports that paragraph's claim and whether a direct quote or a paraphrase would be more effective. You may read the introduction and conclusion paragraphs side-by-side in order to distinguish between background information, thesis ideas, and argument implications. Again, there are many strategies to use, and there is no "right" answer as long as the client can apply it on their own the next time they face a similar writing challenge. (For more strategy ideas, see the Backwards Outlining Module.)

Set Goals for the Session

You should have already asked the client what his/her concerns are. Consider these concerns along with the assignment requirements, your review of his/her argument, structure, and organization, and any patterns you see in his/her writing. When is the paper due? How much time does he/she plan to spend on the assignment

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before turning it in? *Prioritize and tell the client the goals on which you think you should focus. Writing down goals can also be useful as a way to keep the goals “in play” during a session.*

PART 3: TUTOR MOVES AND STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCTIVE WORK AND EFFECTIVE END

Have the Client Read Aloud from the Paper

Reading aloud is key to familiarizing yourself with the client's writing style. Use your judgment to decide what and how much to read. For example, you might want to have the client read aloud their introduction and conclusion for longer papers, but have him or her read through the whole draft if it is under three pages.

Point Out Positive and/or Negative Patterns in the Client's Writing

Remember that our goal for each session is to teach instead of fix. It is your job to teach your clients to recognize and fix positive and negative patterns in their work. Patterns are your clients' frequent and repeated tendencies in their writing.

Teach Techniques/Strategies that the Client Can Use Independently

Make the most out of the appointment time. Ask yourself if you have taken the opportunity to teach the client something that he/she can use independently to help with future assignments. If possible, have the client practice it in your presence so that you can provide guidance.

Establish a “Game Plan” for the Client to Continue Working on the Paper Independently

Before the session ends, be sure to check on client understanding of his/her next steps to improving the paper. This is your opportunity to review what was accomplished during the session and discover what the client has learned from the work you did together. Ask the client to reflect in writing: “Jot down one or two things you would like to do next time you have to [focus of session—brainstorm, outline, revise, etc.]”

Guide the Client to a Computer to Complete the Client Feedback Survey Before He/She Leaves

Show the client how to pull up a client feedback form and give him/her privacy while he/she fills it out.

Write the Client Report

See Report Content Module.

Module Comprehension Check:

1. Review Part 1. List two ways protocol prepares tutors for an effective session.
2. Review Part 1. List two ways protocol prepares clients for an effective session.
3. Review Part 2. How does following protocol help tutors and clients fulfill assignment expectations?
4. Review Part 2. How does following protocol give clients ownership of their paper?
5. Review Part 3. List two ways having clients read aloud helps both tutors and clients.
6. Review Part 3. Why is it essential to notice positive and negative patterns before suggesting strategies?