

# **Tutor Manual**

The Mathematics Learning Center

Mathematics/Computer Science Department York College The City University of New York



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#### INTRODUCTION

Congratulations and welcome to the MLC! In choosing to become a part of the MLC Tutoring Program, you have become a valuable part of our team. You have been highly recommended by faculty and our director, and your acceptance means that we have seen in you the qualities that we consider essential in a committed peer tutor.

The MLC is committed to serving students. As a part of our staff we expect you to hold this among the highest of priorities. Students who come to the MLC regard you as a mentor and role model. As a result, you are expected to model appropriate student behavior such as punctuality, respect for others and a commitment to high academic standard. Also, you are an employee of the university and should dress and conduct yourself appropriately.

The MLC is continuing several programs to help students this year. These opportunities include a series of academic workshops in Math 104, 120, 111, and 121. Other intervention programs are being planned for next semester. We hope all of you will actively participate in these programs and assist with development of new programs as much as possible.

You provide an important service to the students of York College and we look forward to working with you in the semesters ahead.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Every York student is required to complete one or more courses in Mathematics. The MLC strives to foster the academic growth of all York students by helping them succeed in their Mathematics classes. We provide tutoring in all gateway Mathematics Courses.

The mission of the MLC is to provide a comfortable, supportive environment that encourages intellectual and personal growth for students who are both utilizing and providing academic services. In addition, the MLC strives to provide quality programs and a variety of resources that complement the coursework of York students. The goal of the Center is to individualize the learning process for any student who seeks assistance.

Through collaboration with the entire campus community, MLC endeavors to continually expand tutoring efforts and services to meet the needs of students and enhance their

overall learning environment and success. All services offered through MLC are designed to support individual students in their desire to pass their Math classes and thereby achieve their academic goals.

#### JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is the goal of the tutor to assist students in developing the learning skills necessary to master academic subject matter. Specific tutor responsibilities include:

- Scheduling tutoring sessions on an as-needed basis
- Recording tutor contacts on your activity sheet and or on the computer system
- Making sure each tutee signs in & out at the MLC
- Logging in and out to into the Timesheet computer program
- **Participating in all training sessions** for the purposes of acquiring additional skills and completing all assigned job
- Consulting with the coordinator on students' progress
- Maintaining the confidential relationship between tutor and student
- Being punctual, accurate and effective while tutoring
- Notifying the coordinator or director if you are absent or late
- Respecting the honor Code of York College

#### **ABSCENCES / MAKING UP OF HOURS**

- Contact you coordinator ahead of time if you will be absent.
- Give as much lead-time as possible except on unexpected absence (Emergencies). There is a need to find replacement for you when you are absent.
- Excessive absences on your part will be subject to evaluation by the Math Tutor Director/Coordinator.
- You will not be paid for absences. However, you may be able to make up those hours (you will need to arrange a make-up schedule with your coordinator).
- You must be physically present and tutoring during your contractual hours to be paid for those hours.
- Starting from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, you are required to clock-in and out using the MLC-Timesheet software at the front desk. Your hours are calculated from the reports generated by the software.
- If you clock-in and did not clock-out the same day, you will be paid ONLY FOR 1 HOUR. You MUST clock out!

• The center operates on a fixed budget. Therefore, you cannot be paid overtime by working more than you are allotted. The exception is when you are making up hours based on needs.

## PEER TUTORING ETHICS

- ↓ Never criticize an instructor/professor or an assignment
- ✤ Never do a student's assignment for him/her
- Remember that you are a professional representative of MLC even when you are not tutoring. How you conduct yourself outside of the learning center affects how students and faculty perceive MLC. You are an employee of the university; therefore, you should dress and conduct yourself appropriately.
- Evaluate/Study material in advance (be prepared before coming to work)
- Study workshop materials: The center offers different workshops at the end of the semester:
  - Pre-Calculus
  - Calculus I
  - Elementary Statistics
- All tutors must learn/study these materials even if they are not assigned to lead any of the workshops.
- If there is a problem/uncomfortable situation with a tutee or peer tutor, it is your responsibility to contact the Coordinator or, in extreme cases, the MLC director.

### PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR STUDENT EMPLOYEES

Certain behaviors are routinely expected of organizational employees, including student-workers at The City University. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following:

The professional employee does not appropriate organizational resources, including cash, supplies, postage, photocopying, or long distance charges for personal use.

The professional employee does not access organizational records without specific authorization.

The professional employee dutifully performs the assigned task, without regard to administrative oversight.

The professional employee does not complete personal work during hours of employment unless assigned tasks have been completed and without specific authorization.

The professional employee holds confidential any information to which (s)he is granted access within the organization.

By signing the Professional Code of Ethics for Student Employees at The City University, I hereby agree to act professionally during my tenure as a student employee at the MLC. Furthermore, I hereby acknowledge that failure to comply with the Professional Code of Ethics for Student Employees may result in termination of employment, denial of future employment and disciplinary action by the University or by the University Honor Court of the Student Government Association of York College.

Signature

Date

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE THE INITIAL TUTORING SESSION

- 1. Think about good communication skills. What are some of the things you should do when you are speaking or listening to a student?
- 2. What are some of the things you should not say when the student makes a mistake?
- 3. What are some possible questions you may ask to assess the attitude of the student toward the subject matter and gain information about past performance in this particular subject or topic?
- 4. What are some techniques for putting the student at ease during the first session?
- 5. What do you do or say to let the student know he/she has done well?
- 6. What procedure do you follow when covering a topic the student has difficulty with?
- 7. What apprehensions do you have about the initial session?
- 8. What do you expect to accomplish in the initial session?

# SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING TUTORING SESSION OFF TO A GOOD START

1. Introduce yourself and inquire about the student you are working with.



You should begin every tutoring session with a

friendly greeting. This will set the positive tone for the entire session. Make sure to use the student's name. This will immediately add a personal and relaxed feeling to the session.

2. Listen attentively when the student talks about something aside from the



tutoring session. Informal talk may be a necessary preliminary to a fruitful session. Small talk may often contain

important information about details that are complicating the student's work (i.e. missed classes, inadequate sleep, campus activities). Try to direct the student towards your goal if he/she wanders from it.

 Empathize when you can but recognize that you are not a counselor. Be aware of support services available on campus to which the student may be referred.



4. Move conversation toward subject at hand. Usually a gentle nudge is enough, "You really do have a lot going onlet's see if we can make some headway on this assignment."

5. **Ask questions** relating to how the student feels about the course/assignment. What does he/she feel makes it difficult?



6. Avoid a judgmental stance. Do not judge the student for waiting until the last minute. Do not judge the quality of a student's writing or work. Don't judge the professor.

7. Most importantly, **do not judge** the student's work by indicating the

grade you think it deserves. **Convey a positive attitude** by giving praise for real achievement and by offering suggestions for improvement. Positive feedback can be given during each tutoring session. Praise is not just indicative of perfect performance. Progress, no matter how small, should be rewarded.

- 8. **Respect Privacy**. Don't talk about professors, other tutors, or other students by name.
- 9. If an incident involving one of these people makes a good illustration of a



point you're making, tell the story in generic rather than specific terms. This reassures the student you are working with that their privacy will be respected as well.

- 10. Be sensitive to personal and cultural differences.
- 11. **Explain** how things work at the MLC. If it is the student's first visit to the Center, tell her/him how things work so they will know what to expect. Explain your role, introduce them to the lab assistants who are working at the time. Describe the sign-in/out procedure and the resources available in the Lab.
- 12. **Discuss** what the next assignment is. Review the assignment and discuss how to integrate skills.



13. **Encourage tutee** to return for additional help in the future. A friendly closing is as important as the initial exchange of the tutoring session. As with the opening remarks, the closing should include the use of the student's name. The closing of any activity is as important as the beginning. Make sure that the student is leaving with his/her questions answered. Let the student know when and what times you will be available again. Try to have a

"not-so strong student" make another appointment with you. Make sure you have the student sign-in and sign-out at the front desk and that all borrowed resources are returned.

# Be ProActive from the Beginning - You are the professional

In your sessions, be proactive: take positive steps to ensure that you are in control from the beginning. If you are working with a group, arrange a good circle. Have only the chairs you need and eliminate vacant spaces. To accommodate a late comer, widen the circle's diameter, rather than allow the late comer to sit on the fringes of the circle.



If you are involved in one to one tutoring, sit side by side with the work in front of the student or between you and the tutee. Allow for whether the student is right or left-handed. Sit to the right of a right hander, to the left for a left hander. This will put you closest to the work and less able to write on it.

Please remember to keep your hands off the students' work. If pages need to be turned, then allow the student to turn



them. If there is something that needs to be written, either on paper or on the chalkboard, then let the tutee write it. Whatever tools you're using should be in the tutees' hands. You do not run the calculator. Tutees use their own calculator and if you choose to check their work, use your own calculator or the one available at the MLC. Remember your goal is to promote independent learning.

#### DO NOT ...

- Be quick to judge. Many of the students who seek tutoring services have found themselves judged according to stereotypes of character, of ability, and of intelligence. Avoid perpetuating this pattern.
- Assume the role and responsibilities of the instructor. Your job is to help the instructor, not replace him/her.
- 3) **Do your students' class assignments.** You are there to assist him/her, but do not do the work. Always allow the student to hold the pen or the pencil.
- 4) Engage other tutors in discussions that are not related to tutoring while you are in the Lab.
- 5) Bring friends to the Lab for any reason whatsoever.
- 6) Turn your cell phone on while working in the Lab.
- 7) Be afraid to admit to your tutee that you do not know a certain answer. Tell him/her you will find the answer and then follow through with that promise and get back to the student with the correct answer.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR TUTORING "THE DOS**

Tutoring can be an enjoyable experience that is beneficial to all concerned. The tip presented here summarize suggestions which other tutors have found helpful. They be valuable only to the extent that you use them yourself. They are the Dos!!

- 1) Relax and be yourself.
- 2) Always be on time. This adds to the effectiveness of your tutoring. If you late, the study partner may begin to doubt the sincerity of your concern for tutoring and for him/her.
- 3) Set the standards of effort for your tutee as you would set for other student not adopt the attitude, "Well, he/she did as well as could be expected." Av lowering standards out of a feeling that they are unattainable. Don't allow the tutee to just "get by."





- 4) Devote most of the first session to finding the students concerns regarding the subject matter. Most students will be able to tell you of their problem areas. Once you know this, seek the cause of their problem.
- 5) Be sure that you and your tutee have names straight. Learn nicknames if any. It will help to write down your name and give it to your partner. Students are often hesitant to communicate with tutors if they are uncertain of their names. Make it clear that the tutee is free to contact or call you or the MLC at any time he/she feels help is needed.
- 6) Begin tutoring at a level well within the grasp of the student you are helping. This will provide an atmosphere of success. This kind of setting will build the student confidence, and will establish a good working tutor-tutee relationship. Do not use advance method to solve problems in precalculus!
- 7) Indicate whether the student's answers are right or wrong. However, try not to show disapproval to the point that your tutee becomes discouraged. This is very important.
- 8) When you supply an answer, be sure the student understands HOW you arrived at the answer. If you are not sure that he/she does, test the student with a similar example.
- **9)** Break your tutoring session into several short segments of various activities. Sessions of one hour are the most preferable. Sessions of more than one hour only tire the tutor and tutee. This is one of the reasons we maintain a 45 minutes schedule per student.
- 10) Be creative and imaginative in your tutoring methods. Look for ways of motivating your tutee and to involve him/her in the activity. Do not hesitate to use innovative principles of successful tutoring.
- Be sensitive to the existence of emotional/psychological problems that may be affecting the performance of the student. However, it is not the tutor's role to handle these problems. Bring them to the attention of your coordinator or director or direct the student to appropriate support service on campus.
- 12) Do not be afraid to ask for help if you cannot solve a problem the tutee has. You are not an expert in everything, ask a more experienced tutor, the coordinator or the director to help with any question you are not so sure of. Under no circumstance you give a student an answer that may turn out to be wrong!



#### 13) Learn how to work with more than one student at a time.

Go through steps A and B and then let them work on their own while you help someone else. Come back to the student and ask them how things are going and find out if they need more help.

# 14) If a student is in the lab to get help for a take home test or any project/homework that is assigned to be graded, please:

- a. Make sure that the student can do all the mathematical processes on the test/homework/project by themselves.
- b. If they are not proficient with the concept, help them in the problem area until they can do the problems independently.
- c. Do not solve the problems that are on the test/homework/project-assess students with similar problems than the ones they have.
- d. If they cannot solve all the problems, you can help them only if they agree to sign a test form to be sent to his/her instructor informing the instructor that the tutor solved a particular problem on the test.







#### **TUTORING TECHNIQUES THAT WORK**



#### METHODS OF TUTORING & APPROPRIATE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1) **Problem Solving Techniques**-Academic reasoning problems can be solved through careful, persistent analysis. The solution may not be apparent initially, but by pinpointing information, one can soon resolve any problem.
  - a. Look at the problem and find a point "where some sense can be made."
  - b. Work the problem by breaking it into small sequential steps
  - c. If a written description is hard to follow, visualize a mental picture of the ideas in order to see the situation better
  - d. Ask yourself questions about the problem and/or use diagrams; be active in the learning process.

# 2) Recall (memorizing names, dates, places; labeling parts of a diagram; reconstructing a graph)

- a. Practice quizzing the student with a list of diagrams. Give a sample question such as, "List the five components of (whatever subject) and give the name of at least two people associated with each." Only correct the student when needed and continue until the student can do it with ease.
- b. If the task is matching, you might want to make up flash cards to quiz the student.
- c. You might try mnemonic if a list to memorize is long. Mnemonics use visual associations, such as "1 is a bun, 2 is a shoe, 3 is a tree, 4 is a door, etc."

# **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Before you become an effective tutor you must be an effective communicator. It is necessary to be sensitive to your tutee's needs before you can communicate effectively with him/her.

Be Confident	•Communication will occur. If you are unable to express an idea, do not panic- if repeating does not help, try a different mode (writing or drawing) to help clarify an idea.	
Try not to show disappointment	•Avoid responses such as "No, I just told you that five minutes ago," and "Haven't you got that yet?"	
Use body language	•The importance of body movements cannot be overemphasized. When saying "yes", nod. When saying "no" shake your head. Facial expressions and other non-verbal forms of expression are essential to effective communication.	
Speak in short sentences	• There is a certain art involved in eliminating unnecessary words from your verbal and written communications. Interactions are enhanced when this is realized. Speak slowly - especially if you speak with an accent.	

# ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO TALKING AT THEM METHOD

## 1) **Demonstration**

- a. Use the board
- b. Provide handouts that show them how to do something or a process

#### 2) Review old tests

- a. Look for important information
- b. Look at how the instructor formulates their questions.
- c. Look at the type and number of questions asked.



# 3) Guided teaching

- a. Prepare a session about a topic and go through each point
  - step by step.
    - i. Make sure you involve the students.
    - ii. Ask open-ended questions.
    - iii. Get all members of the group to participate.

# 4) Group Inquiries

- Prepare a series of questions based on information covered during previous study sessions.
  - i. Have students work individually or with partners to find the answers to the questions.
  - ii. Have the students share and explain the answers to the whole group.

# 5) Read and Discuss

- a. Have the students complete an assigned reading for the course during the study session time or beforehand.
- b. Students should formulate questions, comments, and observations from the reading.
- c. Hold a discussion session regarding the information read.

# 6) Information Search

- a. Provide suggestions about how to obtain information.
  - i. Formulate topics they can look for information about.
  - ii. Provide any handouts or library materials.
- b. Students will share any information they obtain with the group.
  - i. Have students cite sources and be able to verify information.
  - ii. Discuss as a group whether the information obtained is an accurate reflection of the initial question or problem.





#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP TUTORING SESSION

- 1. <u>Introduce yourself, and have the group members introduce themselves</u> <u>to each other</u>. Even if the students are in the same class, they may not know each other.
- 2. <u>Ask the students if they would like to have a regular agenda</u>, such as reviewing the week's concepts, preparing for a weekly quiz, or summarizing chapter material or each other's lecture notes. If you can get the students involved in the structure of the sessions, they will be more prepared for each session and more committed to the tutoring process.
- 3. <u>Try to work with a manageable number of people</u>. Four to six is ideal. If the group becomes so large that students are talking in "collectives," or if students are at very different levels of ability, consider breaking the group into small circles of 2-3. Give each group a task and try to check in with everyone as you circulate.
- 4. <u>Don't do all the talking</u>. If students only ask you questions, turn the questions back to the group to see if another student can answer them.
- 5. <u>Try to get all the students talking</u>. Make sure no one is left out. A quiet student can be easily overlooked, so make a point of including everyone.
- 6. <u>Don't lecture</u>. A tutoring session should not become a repeat of the instructor's lecture. Instead, ask questions, which promote discussion.
- 7. <u>Use a chalkboard</u> but encourage students to use it also. If you are the only one at the board, students can become passive.
- 8. <u>Get feedback on how the group is going</u>. Read the tutee evaluation forms periodically and ask the students for ideas, comments, and suggestions. You can find these in your MLC-Timesheet profile. Each group session does not have to be the same.
- 9. <u>Ask the students to do a lot of summarizing</u>. Explaining the concepts in a chapter or section is a very good way to review.
- 10. <u>Encourage regular attendance at the sessions</u>. Some of our best students meet regularly in study groups; it is a very good way to get support, and it reduces feelings of isolation.



- 11. If you have a particularly dominating or quiet student, encourage that student to meet with you on an individual basis as well as in the group setting.
- 12. Try some of the following activities with groups:
  - a. Compare lecture notes. Fill in gaps and correct misconceptions as a group.
  - b. Highlight or underline textbook material together. Show how you would mark and "respond to" (with annotation) important ideas in the text.
  - c. Exchange study methods. Talk as a group about how you prepare for tests or get reading done.
- 2. Rework information into other formats, such as a map or chart.
- 3. Anticipate test questions. Try to think of questions at different levels of complexity, such as recall, analysis, and application of concepts to new situations.

Adapted from the Minneapolis Community and Technical College - Tutor Training Handbook

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT**

- $\checkmark$  Bring all necessary materials to the tutoring session.
- ✓ Create specific, realistic goals that need to be accomplished before a tutoring session.
- $\checkmark$  Be motivated to do well and accomplish goals.
- $\checkmark$  Ask questions. The only stupid question is the one that was not asked.
- ✓ Follow up on all material after the appointment.
- ✓ Complete all assignments.
- ✓ Remain receptive to constructive criticism.

#### POSITIVE STUDY HABITS & ENVIRONMENTS

- 1. Go to class regularly. When you have a question, be assertive and ask it; be sure you understand the answer.
- 2. Try taking notes on how your teacher works out problems so that you can use them as a model for assignments.
- 3. Do your homework as soon after class as possible; that way you can seek help immediately if you are having difficulty.
- 4. If you are completely puzzled, try to see your instructor for help or ask for assistance in the MLC.
- 5. Try not to go into class without your homework completed; if it is not completed, finish it right after class; never neglect a problem.
- 6. When you read a textbook, read with a pencil or a highlighter; work out the author's examples as you go; get help with difficulties.
- 7. If you keep up with assignments and review often, you will not have to cram for tests.
- 8. A few days before a test, try reworking (not simply reading over) old assignment problems. Compare your work to your previous work. Study definitions and principles. Test yourself.
- 9. After a test correct it. Be sure that you understand all errors.
- 10. Use old tests and assignments to study for a final exam.
- 11. Start reviewing in advance for a certain amount of time each day.
- 12. Do not try to study when you are tired.
- 13. Keep up with your sleep.

- 14. If you are tired when you are studying, you probably will be better off going to sleep.
- 15. If you are having difficulty with a problem, stop working on it and try it again later.
- 16. Work for short periods (one or two hours) at a time; don't cram for hours.

#### COMBATING TEST ANXIETY

Students often mention "Test Anxiety" during a study session. True anxiety has many physical symptoms, such as sweating, heart palpitations, physical discomfort etc. Students need mild anxiety to combat procrastination and to overcome inertia; so a little anxiety is a good thing. For severe anxiety, students will need a mental health counselor. Having said that, here are some tips for combating test anxiety.

- 1. **Breathe**. Breathe slow and steady. Do not hyperventilate but do not forget to breathe. This may be enough to calm you down and help you focus.
- 2. Visualize. Repeat the visualizations you used to prepare for the test. Picture yourself answering each question correctly and completely.
- **3. Relax your body.** Stretch your arms over your head, do a few neck rolls. Relieving physical tension can help you concentrate on the test. Shut your eyes for a moment or look out the window to give your eyes a break.
- **4.** Note how many questions. Estimate how much time you will need so you can pace yourself.
- 5. Read over the test. Scan the questions. It is not knowing the questions you will face that can cause the greatest anxiety, not the test itself.





### EXAM HINTS

# **Start now!**

- Make up a set of study sheets for each class.
- Each set of study sheets should summarize the reading, your class notes, and any handouts.
- Type the study sheets so they are easily readable. Use plenty of bold type and white space to accentuate important ideas.
- For the remaining weeks, read through your study sheets three times each week.
- Do not try to memorize the information. Just read the notes once, three times per week.
- Attend the workshops organized by MLC in your subject area. Many students find them very helpful

#### TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE EXAM

- Read your study sheets as usual. Make any corrections or adjustments as dictated by the professor. Make sure you understand the format of the exam.
- Go to bed early each night and get a good night's sleep. You will remember and do your best if you are as fresh and rested as possible.
- Exercise will help control the test anxiety and help keep you mentally focused.



### THE DAY OF THE EXAM

• Set your alarm and get up early. Allow plenty of time to get to the exam.



- Eat a good breakfast, including simple sugars (fruit juice), complex carbohydrates (cereal or toast), and protein (milk, eggs, meat, cheese). This will help your blood sugar stay at a stable level, and since your brain runs on blood sugar, you don't want to have an empty tank.
- If you are a habitual user of caffeine, be sure to get your accustomed dose. If not, don't start now. Cinnamon and Peppermint are good substitutes. Take some along. This will help keep your blood sugar even, so you don't tire during the second half of the exam period.

#### DURING THE EXAM

- If you feel tense, relax, take a deep breath, and remember that you know the material because you've been reviewing for weeks.
- Keep your eye on the time. Allow enough time to finish the entire test. Avoid focusing on one question and running out of time on others.
- Read the entire exam before beginning to write. Scan the test and get a feel for your time. Pay attention if the questions are valued. Those points are where you spend your time.
- Multiple Choice questions are a reading test. Read carefully and completely. Read the stem with each option. You are looking to eliminate the wrong ones first.



- After each half-hour, relax, stretch, have a mint. Calm down. You know the material.
- Use the entire exam period rather than rushing through the test. You've paid for it.

### APPENDIX A ASSESS YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The following questionnaire tests your knowledge of tutoring. Indicate whether each statement is true or false by placing a "T" only on the true statements.

\_\_\_1. It's my role to help my students with whatever they need help with.

\_\_\_\_2. If a tutee I work with does not get the information, then I am responsible.

\_\_\_\_3. I know that I will encounter some students who have no motivation.

4. If I feel that I have been assigned to work with a student whose needs are beyond my ability to help, then I should tell my coordinator right away.

\_\_\_\_\_5. At the beginning of every tutoring session, the tutee and I should plan the session and set an agenda for it, even if it takes two or three minutes to do so.

\_\_\_\_6. I would expect that in tutoring sessions, tutees should do more explaining than their tutors.

\_\_\_\_7. It's critically important that I praise my tutees liberally.

8. Providing clear and accurate explanations to the tute is at the heart of my best tutoring.

\_\_\_\_9. Asking good questions is at the heart of my best tutoring.

10. Compared to me, at least some of the students I work with are likely to have very different attitudes toward school and the subjects I tutor.

11. It's important to me to study the materials of the subject I tutor.

12. My students will learn more from what I do than what I say.

Brought to you by Dr. Adefemi Sunmonu – January. 2013.

