

On-Line Tutoring Overview

Spafford Ackerly, February, 2011

Benefits of on-line tutoring:

- **Flexible scheduling** – call whenever you have a question, or schedule a session in advance. I am on-line and in the office most days and evenings, 7 days a week.
- **Convenient** – great for students with busy schedules or multiple residences.
- **Suits modern lifestyles** – communication has never been easier, with webcams, video chat programs, screen-sharing, email, SMS text-messaging, phone, etc.!
- **Reasonable rates** – free introductory sessions; pay only for online time; ask about low income matching funds; easy payments by check, Paypal, or credit card.

Consider on-line tutoring if you (the student):

- **thrive on electronic communication (internet, phone, SMS, email, IRC, VoIP, etc.)** – on-line tutoring offers a variety of interactive formats;
- **are an audio-visual learner** – webcams, video chat programs (e.g., Skype), and screen-sharing services provide audio-visual connections between students and tutor;
- **need frequent reminders and on-going communication** – I am available day and evening to assist, providing reminders or support as needed.
- **need study skills and time management support** – I can help coordinate and manage your workloads (see below);
- **need writing assistance** – I offer timely feedback on multiple consecutive drafts;
- **need occasional or infrequent assistance** – I am available on either a scheduled or on-demand basis;
- **chronically miss tutoring appointments** – I am flexible and accommodating – rescheduling is a snap;
- **travel frequently, live in multiple residences or remote areas** – internet access is the only requirement for remote tutoring.

Overcoming technology obstacles:

- **Screen-sharing** allows real-time 2-way communication of study materials, and is an exceptional way to provide and receive technology support.
- **Video chat programs** (e.g., Skype) allow face-to-face communication.
- **Webcams** mounted on desk lamps project handwritten notes onto your computer, where they can be shared between users.
- **Scanners** provide rapid, efficient transmission of text and note materials.
- **Digital pens** transfer handwritten notes directly to your computer.

Time management and study skills issues – I can:

- **provide oversight and coordination** of a student's workload, overseeing major deadlines, due dates for papers, etc.
- **communicate with teachers** to obtain syllabi, due dates of major assignments, etc.
- **maintain an on-line calendar** of assignment due dates.

- **provide timely reminders** and encouragement to students, via SMS, phone, emails, etc.
- **communicate with a student's support network:** parents, advisors, counselors, etc.

Math and Science Tutoring

- **Transform your webcam into a virtual whiteboard** – use video chat software to share notes and work out solutions, outlines, etc.
- **Share information with screen-sharing.** The software is free! Try join.me, cross loop, or teamviewer software applications.
- **Specialties:**
 - MATH:** pre-algebra, algebra 1, algebra 2, geometry, trigonometry
 - SCIENCE:** physical science, biology, chemistry, basic physics

Writing assistance!

- ***“Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go.”*** (E.L. Doctorow); ***“Writing is thinking on paper.”*** (William Zinsser); ***“Every writer I know has trouble writing.”*** (Joseph Heller)
- **Feedback** is one of the surest ways to improve one's writing, and that's what a remote tutor can offer.
- **Essays, lab reports, research papers, biographies, letters, resumes, and so on** – all of these can benefit from an outside reader.
- **Revisions on papers include 4 levels of comment**
 1. To highlight overall strengths;
 2. To suggest structural revisions;
 3. To identify paragraph-level problems;
 4. To raise sentence-level questions.

Comment [A1]: Strengths highlighted in yellow.

Comment [A2]: Structural revisions suggested in green.

Comment [A3]: Paragraph level problems identified in blue.

Comment [A4]: Sentence-level questions are not highlighted.

Developing a mentoring relationship – dependable relationships are keys to student success.

- What is required to initiate tutoring?
 1. An overview of the student's needs. What kind of tutoring is required, and for how many hours per week?
 2. A primary contact person: an advisor, parent, teacher, etc.; names and email addresses of individuals who should be informed about student progress.
 3. Permission from a parent or legal guardian (for students under 18 yrs old).
 4. Name and contact information of the person responsible for payments.
- An in-person introduction between tutor and tutee is ideal, but a web-cam (Skype) introduction, or at least a telephone call, can suffice. Ideally, this happens in the presence of a school advisor, counselor, teacher, or parent.
- Initial on-site assistance from the remote tutor or a counselor, advisor, or technology coordinator may be required, to troubleshoot computer issues, install necessary software, and procure a speaker phone or headset to facilitate simultaneous voice and keyboard operation.
- What should a student expect in the first few sessions? A remote tutor will:

1. Identify the student's needs – what do we need to work on (this can happen in conjunction with a parent, advisor, etc.)
2. Develop a plan of action. What will we work on first, and how will we accomplish that?
3. Establish means of communication, including primary and secondary contact methods (SMS, email, phone, etc.)
4. Establish expectations about the frequency of communications and sessions.
5. Establish expectations about who the tutor will be in touch with regarding a student's progress.