STRATEGIES FOR TUTORING

The following strategies are suggestions for breaking up your tutoring sessions from the typical question answer format. Strategies

1. The Informal Quiz

The informal quiz is not to be used to formally evaluate student work. Instead, it develops and reinforces comprehension, improves retention of information, stimulates interest in a subject area, and promotes student participation in the tutoring session. It enhances an educational experience in the following manner:

a. Allows weaker students to participate equally with stronger students, in the same session;
b. Permits each student an opportunity to demonstrate competence;
c. Promotes student self-testing
d. Provides the opportunity to reinforce student participation;
e. Generates student trust;
f. Facilitates student's ability to interpret, answer, and predict test questions

The goals may appear to be excessive for what is feasible within a single tutoring session; however, these goals can be accomplished in a small way each time the procedure is used. The informal quiz frequently is used at the beginning of the session. The whole procedure may take no more than 10 – 15 minutes. However, the discussion generated by one or more questions may become the focus of the tutoring sessions.

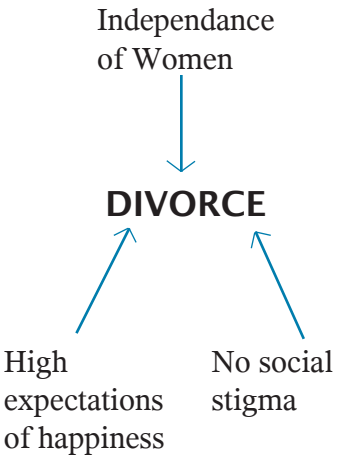
Students may answer questions orally, on paper or on the blackboard. They may collaborate to answer questions, use their textbooks, notes, handouts, etc. Use it to evaluate knowledge or lack thereof and to promote group discussion.

2. Mapping and Matrices

Students need an overview or a framework on which to hang information. Visual models can help them to organize the material and provides and easy mechanism to remember the sequencing of information. Mapping and Picturing are used to draw a picture of the concept presented verbally in the lecture. The relationships between the topics are stressed in the map by the use of arrows.

The first time a matrix or map is introduced; you should provide a sample for the students to use. After they understand the idea, then the group can spontaneously make up matrices as they discuss various topics.

Mapping:



Picturing:

Positions of Theorists on Basic Assumptions

Freedom	Maslow, Rogers, Freud, Skinner	Determinism
Freedom	Rogers, Maslow, Freud	Determinism
Freedom	Jung, Rogers, Maslow, Freud	Determinism
Freedom	Skinner, Erickson, Freud, Jung	Determinism

Term	Paraphrased Definition	Example from Lecture	Example from Textbook	New Example
Oligopoly	A market where a few firms produce all or most of the market supply of a good or service.	Airlines	Soft drink manufacturers	Domestic car makers (G.M.; Ford: Chrysler)
Monopoly	A firm that produces the entire market supply of a good or service	Niagara Mohawk	None	New York telephone local service

3. Post Exam Survey

The following are some questions students might like to think about after taking an exam. Answers to these questions may help them focus on effective exam preparation strategies. Do not use this as a formal handout, but as a basis for discussing exams and exam preparation.

a. Which part of the exam was the easiest for you? Why? (May get into essay, multiple choice, true/false, and short answer type questions. If so, explore the appropriate areas as you continue with the questions.)
b. Which part of the exam was the most difficult? Why?
c. Which of the following activities did you complete prior to the exam?
1. All required reading assignments
2. Preparation and review of reading notes
3. Review of lecture notes
4. Self-testing of material to be covered by the exam
5. Prediction of possible questions
6. Study with friends
7. Others

d. Which of the above did you find most helpful in preparing for this exam?
e. What activities work best for different types of questions? (True/False, Multiple Choice, etc.)
f. How much time (in hours) did you spend preparing for the exam?
g. Did you feel prepared when you walked in to take the exam? Why or why not?
h. How might you study differently for the next exam?

4. Notetaking and Note Processing

Have students take turns reading their notes and focus on the differences and similarities. How does the professor indicate what's important to know? What shape are their notes in? Are their notes organized? Will they be able to read their notes to prepare for an exam? Would a loose-leaf notebook be better to use than a spiral one? Would graph paper be better to use for particular subjects?

Notetaking can be made easier if student prepare for lectures by reading or at least previewing the material to be covered in advance. The vocabulary will then be somewhat familiar which allows for better spelling and organization of notes. Every person will take notes differently. But whatever they do, it should be consistent. If abbreviations are used, a key should be placed at the top of the page to avoid confusion. (i.e. vit. = vitamin, m = mole, e = electron, etc.)

As soon as possible after a lecture, notes should be reviewed and edited. Incomplete areas can be filled in from reading the text. Key points can be highlighted and extra definitions inserted if necessary.

Share your thoughts and ideas on notetaking. What helped you and how do you process your notes? Remember our goal is to help students learn appropriate study skills so they can become effective learners. Students cannot apply themselves until they have the skills to do so.

5. Review The Textbook

Review and preview chapters. Talk about highlighting/ marking textbooks vs. taking chapter notes. Whenever possible, refer students to their textbooks for information and answers to questions. Most students do not know how to use their textbook and avoid using it whenever possible. Give them a tour of their text; show them what is in it and how to use it. Also try to help them make connections from chapter to chapter. How do they relate and fit into the total picture? Make comparisons to the lectures. How does the textbook differ from the lecture?

Reading involves physical and mental participation. The goal is to comprehend, understand, and assimilate that material. Help students to avoid making this a mechanical process just to get the assignment completed. Reading paragraph headings, graphs, pictures and summaries is not only helpful to do prior to lectures, but will also help students read for content. It is advisable to read a chapter in its entirety (after previewing) and then review it for highlighting or notetaking purposes.

6. Predict Test Questions

Students have great difficulty preparing for tests. Help them to learn how to predict test questions by using their notes, textbooks and homework. Let students develop their own questions and quiz each other. Encourage them to find old exams and practice with them. Some texts offer study guides and can be most useful in preparing for exams.

Cramming for tests is common. Homework and reading assignments are often left to the last minute, leaving areas of confusion ignored. Students will look to others for "the quick fix". "Tell me what I need to know for this test so I won't have to study anymore." They become focused on the answers and not the process. Help students to avoid this deadly trap, as it will lead to many disappointments!

Encourage students to meet with their professors several days in advance of a test (not the night before!) Try to time it so that the exam has probably been written. Believe it or not, professors will subtly direct students to study the appropriate material by how they answer questions, give extra information and sometimes say "and don't forget to review….."

7. Work on Vocabulary and Terminology

Use flash cards or develop other memory games to help students learn difficult concepts, vocabulary, etc. Students often do not know "how" to approach learning something. If they haven't been exposed to a technique or "a trick tof the trade" then they have no basis from which to work. Share your ideas. When working on vocabulary, be sure students can give the definition AND apply it. Plus, they should be able to recognize a definition and name the term. Have students repeat or write definitions in their own words instead of repeating "the textbook version." This helps you to determine whether they really do understand the material.

8. Brainstorm Ideas

This is a very effective method in promoting discussion of ideas and concepts. Often students will discover that they really do not understand something as a result of the discussion and it will prompt them to dig further

for information. We often "think" we understand until we have to actually make applications! Students need to "say things out loud." If they can successfully explain a concept to someone else, they have accomplished two things. First, they have demonstrated that they understand the concept. Secondly, they have used another "sense" to reinforce that knowledge.

9. Paired Problem Solving

Have students work on different or the same problems and compare methods and results. You will be amazed at the different approaches students will take. Paired problem solving also avoids one student being put on the spot and causing embarrassment.

When discussing the answers, stress the importance of writing down all the steps in an orderly, neat fashion. Often students become sloppy in their work, skip steps, don not label points on graphs or make inadequate drawings of their work. This causes them to make needless mistakes and professors have difficulty grading their work appropriately.

10. Give Assignments As Appropriate

Use your imagination and use assignments to get your tutees involved in the learning process. Require them to go to the library to find out more about a particular topic. Ask them to see their professor to clarify some points brought about by a tutoring session. Students need to learn how to use the available resources on campus to learn how to help themselves. As they progress in their course work, qualified tutors may not always be available in the upper level courses. Look at it this way, you really aren't asking the students to do more. You are asking them to actually do the required work in the first place!

11. Use Popular Games, Models, Pictures & Graphs

Try to remember how you learned as a child. We sang songs, drew pictures, made up silly little rhymes, used flash cards for constant drill and reinforcement, played games, used bright color and wrote things in big, large letters on the blackboards or sidewalks! Guess what? Those same types of activities are still important to incorporate in college level learning!

Many tutors have adapted games such as Jeopardy, Pictionary, Scattagories, Hangman, Name That Tune, Wheel of Fortune, Monopoly, Scrabble, Who Wants to Be A Millionaire, and Hollywood Squares, which help students relate to the subject and have fun.