

2

THE WRITING PROCESS

You're considering becoming a writing tutor or are already tutoring because you've had some success as a writer yourself. That's no small feat. Writing is one of the most difficult—and most rewarding—things anyone can do. And perhaps your motive for tutoring is to pass on to others what you know how to do well. For someone who likes to write, the opportunity to talk with others about writing and then get paid for it (or receive course credit) is quite a good deal. You'll find many others like you in the writing center field who love talking about language, writing, and helping others use language in important ways.

Keep in mind that talking about writing is perhaps the most important thing you will do as a tutor, and contrast that talk with what's often seen as teaching. Teaching any subject is sometimes narrowly perceived to be the passing on of knowledge from an expert to a novice. You can probably remember many schooling experiences that consisted of teachers (and textbooks) holding those "right" answers and waiting for you to guess what was in their heads and pages—answering you with their subsequent approval or dismissal of your answer. Critics such as Paolo Freire refer to this method as the "banking model" of education in which information is held like a valuable commodity by the teacher, passed to students through lectures and textbooks, and then redeposited by students on multiple-choice and short-answer exams.

So what does this have to do with the writing process and tutoring? Well, writing is unique in how it functions. It fundamentally changes our relationship to whatever we are learning. Consider that the act of writing itself is often a process of discovery or of making meaning or, quite simply, of

learning. The answers aren't predetermined by the teacher (at least not a good teacher) and cannot be corrected by running your paper through a computer program. The concept of writing as a means of learning is fundamental to the writing process—and to writing centers. Thus, it is important that you be reflective about your own writing process and understand the role of the tutor in writers' processes. These are some of the issues we'll address in this chapter.

WRITERS AND THE WRITING PROCESS

A bit of history: In the teaching of writing early in this century, students frequently wrote what were called *themes*. The instructor wrote a topic on the blackboard and students dutifully went to work, crafting as carefully as they could an essay in response. These themes were collected, corrected (in red pen, of course), and returned. The expectation was that students would learn from daily practice and from the corrections their instructor made. Did students learn to write well from these methods? Perhaps some did, but not enough; this led the popular and academic press at the time to declare a crisis in students' communicative skills. As C. S. Duncan of Ohio State University wrote in 1914, "There is a spirit of unrest, a feeling of dissatisfaction in educational circles over the poor work done by students in English composition" (154). Blame was placed on teachers, families, and, most strongly, on the students themselves (particularly since such crises often coincided with increasing numbers of nonmainstream students coming to higher education). One solution at the time was to reconceive the teaching of writing as a laboratory course, akin to the scientific laboratory. Just as chemistry students conducted experiments in order to learn and apply the principles of chemistry, writing students would write in conditions that emphasized practice, guidance, and feedback (whether from peers or their teachers). Of course, much of this practice was in the service of having students make fewer mechanical errors (as early as 1895, John Franklin Genung of Amherst College described composition at his institution as "a veritable workshop, wherein, by systemized daily drill, details are mastered one by one" [174]), but the idea began to take hold that writing was an act that required practice and feedback, not simply the display of information in predetermined forms.

Fast-forward fifty years or so (oftentimes ideas take hold slowly in higher education). By the 1970s, the idea of writing as a process took on a renewed importance as teachers and writers such as Peter Elbow, Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, and Donald Murray became influential. In a time when the function of schooling was called into question (along with a host of other societal institutions), writing was rediscovered in a way, particularly as a way of making sense of one's experience and as a way of control-

ling one's own learning (or for "writing without teachers," as Peter Elbow told us in his influential book of the same name). Also around this time, educational psychology influenced the teaching of writing, as researchers began to study the cognitive processes involved when one writes. Rather than just examining the habits of novelists and successful professional writers, researchers such as Janet Emig, Nancy Sommers, James Britton, Linda Flower, and John Hayes studied the ways that *students* wrote and described writing as a "recursive" act.¹ An additional strand was to reintroduce ideas from classical rhetoric and to look at the act of writing in terms of its rhetorical components, particularly the relationship between purpose, audience, and content. The confluence of these various movements turned into what Maxine Hairston has called "a paradigm shift," a virtual revolution in the way writing was conceived of and taught (albeit a revolution that was fermenting for 70 years or so!).

So what does this all mean for you as a writer and tutor? No doubt, in high school and college English classes, you've been exposed to notions of stages or steps in the writing process, whether called prewriting/writing/rewriting, or gathering/drafting/revising (or a host of other labels and stages). Most important, we believe writing is a process, not a one-shot deal in a theme book, and we understand that a goal for any writer is to control his or her own process and to develop flexibility for approaching any writing task. These two notions—control and flexibility—seem to be opposites but are, in fact, important contrasts, as we described in Chapter 1, and in a bit we will expand on each. Further, writing is now recognized as a social act; it isn't learned merely through drill-and-practice (which James Berlin calls the "current-traditional" approach to teaching writing); writing isn't completed in isolation by individual geniuses or used mainly to discover personal insight (the expressivist theory of writing); instead, writing and learning to write require us to interact with others (often called the social-epistemic or social constructivist theory of writing). As writing center theorist Andrea Lunsford writes, we need to view "knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language in social use, as socially constructed, contextualized, as, in short, the product of *collaboration*" (4). Writing centers, therefore, are key components in this social view, as tutors

¹Sondra Perl describes recursiveness: "Throughout the process of writing, writers return to substrands of the overall process, or subroutines (short successions of stops that yield results on which the writer draws in taking the next set of steps); writers use these to keep the process moving forward. In other words, recursiveness implies that there is a forward-moving action that exists by virtue of a backward-moving action." She says that writers might reread little bits of their writing, might return to a key word or topic, or might further pause and "look to their felt experience and [wait] for an image, a word, a phrase to emerge that captures the sense they embody." "Understanding Composing," *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. ed. Gary Tate, Edward P. J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, 150–51.

and writers engage in one of the most powerful means of helping writers find and share meaning—collaborative talk.

Given that background, we now need to lay out some essentials of the writing process, ones that will probably seem quite familiar.

A Model of the Writing Process

For several reasons, we want to provide you with a model of the writing process. As a writer, you can consider this model in light of how to approach any writing task. As a tutor, you can help writers by intervening in their writing processes, providing specific strategies, or helping them to refine the strategies they already use.

However, several caveats are needed. First, models aren't intended to mirror reality. Instead, models are devices that begin to help us sketch a phenomenon, trace its rough edges, or simply begin to ask important questions. Second, the model we'll describe is quite general—and a weakness of many models is that their generality obscures the importance of individual differences. That leads to our third caveat, one that's particularly important for the tutoring of writing: The writing process is an extremely idiosyncratic act. What works for you won't necessarily work for your closest friend or for a writer you're working with. The goal in applying our model is to develop control and flexibility—those two contrasting notions we mentioned previously. Finally, in the model, we'll describe a variety of strategies that you can both use as a writer and recommend as a tutor; however, in no way have we been exhaustive in our list of strategies. We do recommend that you find out more by consulting your writing center's handouts or the many complete texts on various writing strategies.

Our model of the writing process is based on the kinds of questions writers ask themselves at various points in the completion of any writing task and the strategies they might use to investigate those questions. We use three episodes in the writing process—planning, drafting, and revising—plus a fourth episode, proofreading/editing, more for simplicity's sake than anything else, but it's important to keep in mind the nonlinear shape of the writing process (one that's quite hard to render on paper). In other words, rather than steps or stages that one goes through one at a time, we conceive of the writing process as cyclical (or perhaps a vortex that sucks up all of your free time?!). You will often revisit the questions you first pose and the strategies you use to pursue them. Additionally, many things can influence the relative importance you attach to the various stages. For instance, writing a shopping list will require far less revising than writing a letter to the editor. And writing an essay analyzing an assigned reading you're not sure you even liked will take far more planning than a letter to a friend. Overall, we need to stress that context is everything. But first, let's finally describe

the model. As you read this description, think about how closely it aligns to the process you use for school-based tasks:

Episode 1: Planning

Questions you might ask:

- What do I know about my topic?
- What is my purpose for writing?
- Who are my intended readers, and how much do they know about my topic?
- How is this task like others I have had before?
- What structure will work best for my topic?

Strategies you might use to investigate these questions (not an exhaustive list!):

- Clustering: a visual representation of your thoughts on the topic, usually starting with a single word that invokes word associations, which you write around that first word, drawing a circle around each association and continually building until you've drawn a "cluster" of words (as conceived by Gabriel Rico).
- Freewriting: quick and exhaustive writing on the topic, often with a timed goal ("I'll write for five minutes without stopping") and, as Peter Elbow tells us, likely to turn off your overwrought editor and tap into the generating portions of your brain.
- Conversation, either in class or with friends.
- Brainstorming: unstructured exploration of your ideas.
- Reading and research on your topic.

Overall, in this episode you're *trying* to answer the planning questions, not necessarily finding answers, and using the strategies that you feel will work best for your topic and task. Consider that a grocery list might come with a quick brainstorm or a conversation with a roommate or spouse, but an essay on the factors that contribute to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest might require far more careful, extensive, and multistrategied planning.

Episode 2: Drafting

Questions you might ask:

- What do I know about my topic?
- What is my purpose for writing?
- Who are my intended readers, and how much do they know about my topic?
- How is this task like others I have had before?
- What structure will work best for my topic?

Yes, we know, the questions are the same as for the first episode. That's our way of saying that, throughout your writing, you are working toward answering these questions. That is also why you might reuse the strategies we described earlier. However, we feel there is one component in drafting that might not be as fully formed during planning—your *intention* or the feeling you get when you are trying to render on paper an idea or image or argument. You have an intention, usually quite out of focus in the early stages. Composition researchers Lil Brannon and Cy Knoblauch call this intention the “ideal text,” as if you have a finished copy of your essay locked somewhere in your mind, and the point of this early writing is to find which strategy is the key to free that ideal text so that your rough drafts (your real text) will closely match the ideal. Brannon and Knoblauch are suspicious about this idea, particularly because ideal texts are often presented as absolutes by teachers or authority figures, with little room for students to challenge those ideas. We prefer to imagine that your intention as a writer and just how you'll go about putting that intention into words aren't necessarily complete in your mind. Instead, you need to use writing and language to bring a shape to your intentions. This is perhaps why it just feels so darn good to get something right, to find the words to express your meaning. Thus, in the drafting episode of the composing process, you're doing some writing, perhaps lots of it, as you attempt to render your intentions on the page (or computer screen).

Strategies you might use when drafting:

- Any or all of those you used for planning.
- Outlining: Creating an outline can be particularly useful if you feel a strong loss of control—you have lots and lots to say, but need to figure out how you will present that material. However, outlines need to be flexible, not individual cages out of which your writing can never escape.
- Visual representations of your topic: We mentioned clustering as a planning strategy, but it's worth repeating here that if you have a strong sense of what you want to say, but not a clear sense of how all of those ideas will fit together, visually representing your work can be powerful. Sketch pads, black- or whiteboards, floors filled with arranged piles of readings or notecards—anything that enables you to think visually can work here.

Episode 3: Revising

Questions you might ask:

- What do I know about my topic?
- What is my purpose for writing?
- Who are my intended readers, and how much do they know about my topic?

- How is this task like others I have had before?
- What structure will work best for my topic?

Yes, at the risk of badgering, we know that we've repeated the questions again, but we want to emphasize the recursive nature of the writing process. By this episode, you have perhaps become satisfied with some of your answers to these questions. However, some might still remain under-explored. Revising is a vital episode for many reasons. First, some researchers (e.g., Beach; Faigley and Witte; Flower et al.; Sommers) have shown that revising is a crucial factor that separates successful writers from less successful ones. More significant, it has been our own experience that students often confuse revising with editing, our final episode. When you revise, you are making changes on a large scale, dealing with what Thomas Reigstad and Donald McAndrew call “higher-order concerns.” This is when you realize that the “real” start of your essay is on page 3 and that you're better off saving the first two pages for another day. This is also when you realize that you've been repeating yourself on pages 2 and 4 and can perhaps group those parts together. And, finally, this is when you realize (and all of these realizations might come from your own reading of your drafts, a friend or peer's reading, or a writing center tutor's questions) that you simply need to develop one of your points more fully or flesh out a description or make much clearer just what your point is (and thus return to some planning strategies). Dealing with higher-order concerns is often what makes your writing go from good to great.

Contrast the moves above with what we'll call *later-order concerns*,² things such as fiddling with your wording, checking your spelling, making sure you've used *you're* instead of *your*. These sorts of sentence-level fixes should come later in the process (though we won't claim that all writers don't fiddle with words and sentences as they draft; for less-experienced writers, however, the fiddling can subsume getting any real writing done). Also, sentence-level fixes are much more the province of editing than revising. They are certainly important and shouldn't be neglected, but an obsession with error should be avoided at all costs.

Strategies you might use when revising:

- Any or all of those you used for planning and drafting.
- Seeking feedback: We won't necessarily assume that, because you're learning to be a writing center tutor, you were a dutiful user of writing center services yourself (though we do hope so). Nevertheless, seeking

²Reigstad and McAndrew call these *lower order concerns*; however, we'll call them *later-order concerns* because we think that correctness is pretty important, especially to writers and often to instructors.

feedback at any episode in the writing process is valuable, and revising is perhaps the point at which most writers seek feedback. Rather than imagine an intended reader, why not seek out a real one and find out if you're getting your point across?

- **Glossing your text:** An effective revising strategy we've found is to go back over our drafts, writing in the margins a brief (just a couple of words) description of each paragraph's content (we sometimes call this writing an outline in reverse). When you look at your descriptions, you can detect whether you've been repeating yourself. If your descriptions are difficult to write, you have an indication that your paragraph is unfocused or consists of too many topics. Your marginalia can also include not just the content of your paragraphs, but their function within sections or the essay as a whole. Now is the time you can discover that the paragraph you've marked "conclusion" contains an entirely new topic or that you're spending too much time on a single idea that's not central to your main point.

The Final Episode: Editing/Proofreading

Having made mention of later-order concerns, we would be remiss not to suggest some strategies for approaching editing/proofreading (and keep in mind that we'll discuss the important differences between editors and tutors in Chapter 3). Perhaps the best bit of advice we can offer is to edit in several passes with a different focus on each pass. For instance, you might read your text once just looking for spelling mistakes (and reading backwards—from the end to the beginning—can force you to see each word in isolation). And then you might read your text looking only to shorten sentences and paragraphs, cutting out excess words. And then you might read focusing on the kinds of homonyms that have given you trouble (the find/replace function of your word-processing software is great for this strategy).

One other strategy we offer writers in the writing center is to have them read their drafts aloud, if not to their tutors, then simply to themselves. Reading aloud forces you to *hear* your language and see errors that your eyes glossed over previously. Overall, the idea in editing/proofreading is to create some distance between yourself and your text or, more accurately, between what you've said and how you've said it. If you're still clarifying the point you are trying to make, you are revising. If you put that content aside and focus on the mechanics of your language, you are editing. This distinction is why we caution student writers to save editing for the very end of their process. Why fiddle with your mechanics when you might strike that entire sentence or paragraph in the service of clarifying your point?

TUTORS AND THE WRITING PROCESS

In no way have we been exhaustive in our list of strategies during each episode in the process (we encourage you to refer to the many books on these topics). One thing we do want to point out, however, comes back to the ideas of control and flexibility, one of those contrasts central to writing and to tutoring. Writers need to develop control of these strategies, and this control includes not simply knowing what strategies might be available, but knowing how to use a strategy. And then not just knowing what and how, but knowing when the use of a strategy would be appropriate (this strategic knowledge concept comes from reading researchers Scott Paris, Margerie Lipson, and Karen Wixson). Our previous example of outlining is a case in point. For years and years and still today in many textbooks, writing seemed to be a relatively simple process that started with choosing a topic and then writing an outline. However, we've worked with many frustrated writers in the writing center who told us, "I just cannot seem to come up with my thesis and outline." Well, that's not a surprise since they haven't created any material yet to find a focus or to organize into an outline. They simply didn't yet know what they wanted to say (content), much less how they would say it (structure). Applying the strategy of outlining at this point for these writers will lead to nothing but frustration. Instead, you can help these writers generate material in order to find a central focus. Brainstorming, mapping, clustering, or any of the strategies we described in Episode 1 would be useful. Once again, in terms of strategies, writers need to know the what, how, and when; they need to be flexible and adjust the way they work, depending upon a host of factors—the writing task itself, the conditions under which they are writing, the point of the process that they need to emphasize at that moment, and countless other things that make writing such a complex act.

Flexibility and control can be tied to an important concept that has grown out of work in cognitive psychology—the idea of metacognition or thinking about thinking. Consider how aware you are of your writing process. Do you need to think about how to get started when you're given a writing task? Do you consider the various prewriting strategies at your disposal and the appropriateness of each for what you are facing? No doubt, as a successful writer, you've given some thought to these questions, though you've probably internalized the answers to some degree. But in our work with less-successful writers, we've seen that issues of how well they know and can control the processes they use to write can be problematic. Thus, a goal for every writer is to develop strategic knowledge about each phase of the writing process; writing center tutors can be a vital element in helping writers learn metacognitive control.

Perhaps the most important thing we can say about the writing process and your work as a tutor is this: Avoid creating clones of yourself, and avoid teaching *your* processes as if they are the tried and true methods of approaching any writing task. Sure, they've worked for you as an English major (or sociology or business or biology or undeclared major), but that doesn't mean they'll necessarily work for another. Instead, as a tutor, you should help writers develop control of and flexibility with their writing processes.

One clarification: We are not saying that you should never bring up the strategies you feel have been helpful to you. Remember that writers need to know *what* strategies are available. If you're a big fan of clustering and the writer has never tried it, pull out those big pieces of paper and have the writer cluster away. The same goes for any strategy. What's important is not to offer the strategy as a sure-fire solution; instead, you are helping writers develop their strategic repertoires. You can increase writers' options, teaching them what strategies are available, how to use those strategies, and the most appropriate time to apply a given strategy.

We've slipped somewhat into lecture mode here, but that's because the teaching of writing is fraught with instances of well-intentioned individuals simply applying the "teaching" methods that worked best for them (we've particularly seen this phenomenon when it comes to the teaching of grammar; "but I learned by diagramming sentences," they say). This tendency is difficult to avoid, and that is one of the important reasons why you need to reflect deeply upon your own writing processes. Oftentimes, we aren't even aware of how prescriptive and controlling our teaching behaviors can be. Keep in mind that your goal is to create options for writers, not cut them off. And one of the many joys of tutoring is that *you* will learn, from writers, strategies that you had never considered before. Thus, an important line of inquiry that you can pursue in any tutoring session is to ask, "So, how did you go about writing this?"

One last point: Many writers don't necessarily ply their trade in response to assigned topics and in exchange for a grade or class credit. Those conditions are unique to writing in academic settings. And it is in those settings that the writing process and the tutor's role in that process need special consideration.

WRITING IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

We've made the point a couple of times in this chapter that the writing process model that we offer is idealized. This quality is perhaps most true when it comes to the application of the model to writing in academic settings. Consider the questions about purpose and audience ("What is my

purpose for writing? Who are my intended readers, and how much do they know about my topic?"). If you are writing a paper for a class, obviously your purpose is to complete an assigned task and your audience is your instructor. Of course, you might say that your purpose is to convince your reader of your point of view and your audience consists of your peers. However, in most instances, this audience won't be giving you a grade or sending your name in to the registrar at the end of the term in order for you to receive credit for the course. Most writing assignments are quite artificial, and your audience—your instructor—holds tremendous evaluative authority. These elements cannot help but powerfully affect the writing done in academic settings.

What we are addressing here is the relationship between the writer, the instructor, and the writer's text. We hope that you have been lucky enough to feel empowered by the writing you have done and that your instructors haven't made the writing they've required merely a test of how well you've mastered the course content (not that there isn't a role for this sort of writing, but it's certainly a limited role). Instead, you've been able to use writing to make meaning, whether that means discovering and communicating how you feel about a significant event in your life, an important reading, or a topic you feel strongly about. And you've not just found meaning through writing, but you're able to share that meaning with others (your readers, of course)—connections that remind us how much we depend upon human fellowship.

However, some writers you might work with in the writing center won't be coming from such positive experiences. They fully realize that the purpose of their essay is to get a grade and eventually course credit and that their audience is their powerful instructor. Thus, their expectation is that you help them figure out just what it is their instructor wants and how they can go about getting a decent grade.

Other writers, both native and nonnative English speakers, will seemingly be at a "cultural divide" from their instructors, their writing tasks, and, often, from you. Differences and cultural expectations due to language, ethnicity, gender, race, and class can often manifest themselves in something as "simple" as a paper due for a class. For instance, some students' writing closely resembles their speaking, and if these students speak with accents or in nonprivileged form, such as Black English, you might be put into the position of defending the implied values of academic writing—values that stem from largely Western, male, and Caucasian influences. Before you know it, you will be assuming a "regulatory role," as Nancy Grimm calls the function of writing centers, often inadvertently, to manage difference and act as an enforcement mechanism for the status quo.

Now, rather than have you resign your tutoring job before you get started, we want to point out that these dilemmas, while vital and complex,

are also best managed by acting in ways that we recommend throughout this book: being sensitive to writers' backgrounds and challenges, asking questions about the writers' tasks and their understanding of those tasks, and working to create options for writers, not to close off those possibilities. Closer investigation of these dilemmas also offers excellent opportunities for writing center research. In Chapter 4, we'll delve more deeply into those often assumed expectations that you and writers will bring to a writing center session and how they can affect your work.

RENT TO OWN

A notion central to writing center work is that writers need to "own" their texts. In Chapter 3, we draw a distinction between editing—something that perhaps many of your classmates have sought from you because they recognized your writing abilities—and tutoring. As we have discussed, many writers might come to the writing center under the impression that a tutor will simply fix their texts. We often call this the dry-cleaner model of writing center and unfortunately have had more than a few writers ask us if they could drop off their papers and then return when they were "done." However, tutors don't fix texts; we teach writers how to fix texts. We don't tell writers what to write; we ask questions about and react as readers to what writers have already written or are thinking of writing. In these ways, writers "own" their texts, and writing center workers respect this ownership just as we would want it for ourselves.

Nevertheless, the student-text-teacher relationship complicates notions of ownership. For many writers, a more accurate concept would be that they "rent" their texts, occupying a topic and content for the length of time specified by the teacher/landlord and thinking little of what they have written once the rental period has ended. This is perhaps why we have had writers tell us flat out in writing center sessions that they plagiarized much of their research papers or that they "hate to write" but know that they need to overcome the "burden" of a required writing course. Writing is not meaningful for these writers because they have never had the experience of its meaning (in school, at least; we've also seen that some of the most reluctant writers in our classes are avid private writers, keeping journals and writing poetry that they would never share). Do these writers "own" the writing they are doing in their classes?

For the writing center tutor, these issues certainly complicate neat renderings of the writing process. At times, writers will position you as proxies for their instructors, expecting an evaluation of their writing. At others, they will put you in the role of coconspirator, especially when they admit

plagiarizing or simply not caring about what they're writing. What is important is that you are aware of the writing process—especially the ideas of control and flexibility—and how writing in academic settings affects that process. As a student yourself, you know best what it means to write in academic settings and can best impart to those you work with in the writing center the strategies that are effective.

It is our experience that most writers are eager to find meaning in what they write, even if the task wasn't best designed to achieve that end. And one of the great pleasures in writing center work is helping writers find that meaning. Your knowledge of the writing process will be vital in providing that help.

3

THE TUTORING PROCESS

In this chapter, we want to take you through the entire tutoring process—from opening a session to closing one—and provide some powerful tutoring strategies. We'll expand on these strategies in subsequent chapters as we take you from anticipating (Chapter 4), observing (Chapter 5), and then participating in sessions, first with your fellow trainees (Chapter 6), and then on your own (Chapter 7). We'll also offer ways to think about specific situations you'll encounter: helping students with their reading (Chapter 8), helping nonnative English speakers (Chapter 9), analyzing your sessions (Chapter 11) and, finally, troubleshooting those many difficult situations that all tutors encounter (Chapter 13).

We'll frame our overview of the tutoring process by showing how tutors approach each stage of a session and contrast that with what editors might do in the same situation. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the most important contrasts in writing center work is the difference between editing and tutoring. You are probably already a skilled editor, and your services are in demand from friends and classmates. Also, by no means do we want to denigrate the good work that many editors do (after all, you might choose that career); however, writing center work is based on the belief that writers need to do the writing, not their tutors. Like any of the contrasts we presented, the tutor/editor one is on a continuum, and there'll probably be instances outside of the writing center where you'll be closer to the editing end (and hopefully be paid for that challenging service). In the writing center, though, we advise you to tutor, not to edit; after all, it's the writer whose name is going on that paper, who's paying for those credits,

and who'll be getting the grade. But before we get too strident, we need to define in more detail the differences between editing and tutoring.

When you think of an editor, you might think of a cranky, hard-bitten, cigar-chomping Perry White, calling all the shots and making all the decisions, sending Clark Kent and Lois Lane off on assignments. Or you might think of someone who is responsible for making someone else's good writing perfect—that is, a proofreader. Real editors of various kinds probably wouldn't like these stereotypes of their work, but these descriptions come close to what a lot of friends do when they are asked to look over a paper. That is, your friend hands over the paper, picks up your last slice of pizza, and loses himself in *Days of Our Lives* while you go to work with a pen or a pencil.

You might limit your looking over of the paper to proofreading, and this usually involves making corrections for your friend; it may go beyond proofreading and involve suggesting a better word or a better sentence; it may even involve some advice: "I had a class with her, and she always wants you to . . ." When you do this kind of editing for your friends, you are assuming a large measure of control over their papers (and often they want you to). For tutors, however, this control can squelch any real learning on the writer's part.

THE TUTOR DOES NOT—AND DOES— HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT

An important difference between editors and tutors has to do with the idea of being an expert. Editors are often seen as expert wordsmiths, always knowing the right word, the correct grammatical fix, or the key passage to delete. The writers you work with might indeed put you in this role, just as some of your friends might have, but tutoring expertise is quite different.

As a tutor, you don't have to be an expert on the subject matter of the paper the writer is working on, and you don't even have to be an expert on grammar and correctness—knowing that something isn't right is probably enough (though having a good working knowledge of English grammar and usage can often be helpful, particularly with nonnative English speakers who will know those rules quite well). But you do have to be an expert in some things, each of which we'll explain in more detail in this chapter: knowing how to set a good tone for the conference and making the writer feel comfortable; knowing which kinds of issues to address first; being patient and listening to the entire paper, since it's easy to get hung up on an early section when the real challenge might come later; knowing how to ask questions that are open-ended (not questions that can be answered with a yes or no) and that you really want answers to and don't know already; knowing techniques that let the writer make the decisions; knowing that

sometimes our questions take time to answer and having the patience to wait for the writer to come up with a reply; and knowing that when the writer revises, many of the problems with correctness will improve.

As a tutor, rather than as an editor, you'll have to know when more is needed—that is, when there are so many problems that you can't deal with them all in one session—and you'll have to know what to do with students who can't complete everything. You'll have to get a sense that with some writers, you can't address every last problem in the paper, and you'll have to be able to choose one or two to begin with, but then encourage the writer to come for more help. You'll have to know when a writer needs to come back after revision to work on correctness. You'll know that scheduling another appointment at the end of the session is a good way to help the writer stick to her resolve to revise and that the next session should be with you again, if schedules permit. You'll have to be sensitive to due dates; if the writer only has an hour, she may appreciate knowing that she needs to re-think her organization, but chances are she won't be able to do much about it, so you and she can focus on correctness. But you'll also have to know that it's a good idea to invite her back so she'll have a better sense of how to organize and what effect organization has on readers.

All of that is a lot to learn. But as you see, being an expert on grammar didn't even come up. And the writer is responsible for being the expert on her subject matter. If you know the subject well, that's wonderful, but if you don't, it's all right. You can usually still tell what kind of paper is appropriate, whether or not the arguments are well supported, if the organization is clear to you, and whether the audience is being addressed in an effective way.

Nevertheless, we need to mention that there are times that disciplinary expertise will be important. For example, a writing tutor who is a biology major will have much more knowledge of how to approach writing up scientific data than would someone who's never had to approach that task, and a business major will know more about the specifics of writing a business plan than would a theology major. In other words, depending on your major and your experience, you might have specific knowledge about the writing conventions of particular majors or disciplines. Now, this isn't to say that, as a tutor, you'll merely tell the writers, "No, the results of your experiments do not go in your methods section." Instead, you'll have even greater knowledge of the important questions to ask than would a more "general" tutor: "Why did you put your results in the methods section? How have other writers dealt with that placement in some of the research articles you've read?" Your goal is still to let writers control their own work, but your expertise in these matters can be quite valuable. Many writing centers have recognized this value and recruit tutors—often graduate students—from a wide variety of majors, encouraging writers to match up with someone in their discipline. But we also want to repeat a warning: As a

tutor, rather than an editor, your job isn't to offer content expertise and launch into a protracted lecture on the roots of the Russian Revolution. You need to respect writers' need to discover—with your help—the information they need to clarify a point or expand an argument.

BREAKING THE ICE

Dawna commented in her tutor-training class one day that her first visit to the writing center a few months before had been a disappointment because of *her* expectations. She'd had a presentation in her literature class by a tutor and had been told about the role of the writing center but still believed that the writing center was a place where experts told you how to fix your paper. She felt that the tutor wasn't doing a good job because he expected her to do all the revising. She asked if there wasn't a good way to let writers know when they first arrive what will happen in the session. As a result, we've started asking writers, "Have you been here before?" If they have, then we can relax and get started. If not, after we ask some initial questions about the assignment and the stage of the project, we give writers a good idea of what will happen and possibly help them to avoid disappointment or frustration.

Writers can come to the writing center with either clear or vague ideas of what will happen, but many come with apprehensions and vulnerabilities. Some see it as a sign that they are not strong writers (it isn't, necessarily). Most are nervous. So taking a few minutes to get to know the writer is really important. Even if you only have a short time to work together, it's important to set a collegial, congenial, friendly tone during those crucial first minutes.

Here are some e-journal entries based on a question about making writers comfortable.

I think the two main reasons that students are so afraid to come to the WC is because they are afraid to show their work and also because they may not feel as smart as they really are. It boils down to a confidence issue, and I think it is part of the job as a tutor, to help them maintain their confidence.

—Kip

I think that students feel awkward enough having something as personal as their writing examined and shared with another. . . . It's important to establish a rapport with them that lets them know you're on their level, not this abstract pedestal of English superiority. As a tutor, I think it's important to develop skills that let you gauge and read a per-

son, get a feeling from them. A lot of times, you can just try to be warm and friendly, and humorous. That seems to ease most people. Some writers who are more shy may be scared off by that. In that case, I think it could help just to be more gentle, more reassuring.

—Maggie

In most of my observations, the tutors begin the session by asking the writer what they know about the Writing Center. This allows the tutor to explain why the writer is going to read the paper aloud, which seems to make the writer a bit more comfortable. I've also noticed that the MORE dialogue that takes place before the paper is read, the MORE comfortable the writer seems to feel. It is almost as though the writer needs to establish a "relationship" with you before just diving into the tutoring session.

—Stephanie N

The most effective session I have watched is one in which Katie had an ESL student. I could tell that he was very apprehensive about reading his paper because his English wasn't very good, and here he had two people to read it to. . . . To get the session going, she just asked him about what he was trying to say (it was a personal statement for an application) and then really listened to him tell the story in his own words and then we worked to put that more concisely than he had it.

—Liz K

START WITH QUESTIONS

So, you're on your first shift in the writing center, you've broken the ice, and now you're ready to help that first eager writer, paper clutched in his hand. What do you do? Think about the way you might look over a friend's paper when you are in the role of editor. Chances are, you take the paper and probably go off with it, perhaps somewhere quiet, where you can concentrate.

As a tutor, you're going to do this process differently. We train our tutors to start by asking writers a few basic questions before they even consider the draft:

- What was the assignment?
- What is your central point or main argument? (We don't say "what is your thesis?" or the writer is likely to read us a sentence that won't help us much. When the writer sums the paper up and we write that down,

sometimes the summary is a better thesis than the one in the paper. We can then help the writer see that, so write down the paraphrase for later.)

- What concerns you, or what do you want me to pay careful attention to? (And we write this down, because we'll surely come back to it later and either reassure the writer or address the issue that's raised.)

After you write those answers down, you're ready to work with the writer on the draft.

READING ALOUD

The next step is probably a major shift from what you're used to doing: We recommend that you ask the writer to read the paper aloud to you while you take notes. If you've never done this before, we know that this idea takes some getting used to. But think of the action of taking your friend's paper and going off with it or writing on it. You're in control. You're calling the shots. And the writer in a writing center is probably someone you don't know, someone who doesn't have your pizza to eat and doesn't have a TV handy. If you were to read silently, there would be an awkward moment as he waits for your diagnosis. That metaphor from medicine equating bad writing with sickness or disease comes too easily to mind for this to be a good thing, we think.

When the writer reads the paper, he accomplishes several things, in addition to keeping in control. As you listen, you make a mental note not to interrupt, except to ask him to repeat something you didn't catch, and you listen to the whole paper. Listening to the whole thing from start to finish and taking notes puts you in the role of the learner and the writer in the role of the expert. And our anecdotal evidence is pretty good that the reader is listening, too, to the way the draft is working. Sometimes he'll pause and make a mark in the margin. Sometimes he'll say, "Oh, that sounds bad," and you can say, "Put a checkmark next to it and we'll come back to it." But he's giving his draft a critical reading in ways that will help him revise.

You're taking notes, listening. As we've already pointed out, he's the expert, since it's his paper. We talked about the editor's making all the final decisions, but in a good tutorial, the tutor asks questions, and the writer decides what to do with a draft.

Not all writers benefit equally from the practice of reading aloud, however. Some ESL writers will have great difficulty reading aloud, though their speech will be fine. If writers feel hesitant, don't force the issue. Offer to read for them. TJ writes an e-journal entry that shows how this can work out:

In one session I observed of Paula tutoring, the writer said she really did not want to read the paper, so I read it for her. Throughout the session she became increasingly comfortable and open to discussion. At

the end of the discussion, when all the barriers had been knocked down, she confided that she had a learning disability that made reading hard for her. This was unnoticeable by her writing style, but I can only imagine how much more comfortable she must have been when someone else read for her so she would not have to expose herself before she really wanted to.

—TJ

AN EXAMPLE OF OPENING A TUTORING SESSION

Because what we've described up to this point is so important, we include the following transcript as an example, and we recommend that you read it aloud, preferably with a partner taking the second speaking role. This excerpt comes from the beginning of a session and starts with the writer asking for general feedback on her paper, and then the tutor asks about what the writer is working on:

Writer: This is an analytical paper.

Tutor: Okay.

Writer: It's basically regarding a reading passage assigned in the class, and we're supposed to do a critique on that.

Tutor: Okay. And two things: First, what was the reading passage?

Writer: The reading passage was "The Tourist," by Jamaica Kincaid.

Tutor: Jamaica Kincaid, yeah, I know her, but I don't know that [piece]. Was it an entire essay or just a passage from an essay?

Writer: Actually it was a short essay.

Tutor: Mm, hmm. And when you say critique it, what is your conception of what that involves, what that task involves?

Writer: Well, I'm supposed to take a stand, whether I agree with her or I have a different opinion, and I guess I have a different opinion.

Tutor: Okay. So tell me two things, what was her position?

Writer: She doesn't like tourism . . . because she comes from a different country, I guess.

Tutor: Yeah.

Writer: And she doesn't like tourists going to her country because they exploit her country in such a way.

Tutor: Mm, hmm. That's her main reason?

Writer: Right.

Tutor: Because it constitutes exploitation? And does she give examples of the exploitation, what that might look like?

Writer: Well, in the paper I have some of her viewpoints but, and then basically she says that, at the very end she says that the natives, every native would like to travel, that's for sure, but most of the natives in this world are very poor and so they are not able to, they cannot afford to go to other countries, so they would envy you and the fact that you, as a tourist, come to their country, it makes them jealous more.

Tutor: Mm, hmm. So her audience is, the readers she has in mind, sounds like those who would be tourists?

Writer: Right.

Tutor: I'll tell you what, will you read it to me? Reading's a good way, you can tell me, in a sense, what I should listen for, what your concerns are with this draft. And reading it out loud is a good way for you to get a feel for how it's shaping up, what your language is like.

Writer: Okay.

Notice several things in this excerpt about what the tutor does. He doesn't just ask about what the assignment is (an "analytical paper," according to the writer), but he also probes further by asking questions. What did the writer have to read? (And notice that the tutor immediately acknowledges that he's not familiar with the reading passage, thus putting the writer into the position of teaching him the essay's content.) What is the writer's conception of an analytical paper? And once she describes that task ("I'm supposed to take a stand, whether I agree with her or have a different opinion"), he asks more questions to preview the paper itself: What is the author's position? What evidence does she present to support that position? Who seems to be the author's intended audience—whom is she trying to persuade?

These questions accomplish several things. They probe the writer's understanding of the assigned task and of the reading itself. They also introduce some of the elements of a critique essay: a summary of the author's main claim, a presentation of her evidence, and a sense of her intended audience. Once the writer gives this information, it provides the foundation for

what will happen once the writer reads the paper itself, a means of checking back on whether or not the writer has included these elements and is consistent with what she told her tutor, compared with what she wrote.

Notice, too, that the tutor asks the writer to read her work aloud, giving a short justification. Thus, in this passage the tutor establishes his responsibilities: to ask about the task and the context, to help the writer better understand the task, and to evaluate how well the writer fulfills her stated purpose. Overall, he's putting himself in the position of reader of her essay, making as visible as possible what he'll be expecting and listening for as she reads her essay aloud.

Now consider that the dialogue on the previous page took up only about two-and-a-half minutes! The first few minutes of a session are crucial to establish a rapport with the writer, set goals, and lay a foundation for what next occurs. The exchange that time was brief, but what occurred was certainly crucial to the success of the session as a whole.

Here's another way of thinking about the opening of a session. The series of activities we engage in offer the writer repeated opportunities for reflection about the paper and about ways of talking about the draft. Here is a handout we give to tutor trainees at Marquette. We make it clear we don't expect tutors to follow it as a blueprint, but it lays out the various opportunities for the writer to think analytically and critically about a draft they bring.

The First Steps in a Conference Where the Writer Has a Draft

<i>The Activity</i>	<i>The Purpose/Intent</i>
Greet the writer and <i>ask</i> what he is working on.	Create a friendly relationship or break the ice
Have the writer fill out a writing conference record (WCR—see the example on page 43).	<p>Collect information for our database with an eventual eye to communicating the information to others</p> <p>Find out the <i>due date</i> of the work</p> <p>Learn what the writer defines as the main issue or problem or challenge or goal</p> <p><i>Provide the writer with the opportunity to see how she describes writing tasks</i></p> <p><i>Provide the writer with an opportunity to reflect on her purpose</i></p>

<i>The Activity</i>	<i>The Purpose/Intent</i>
Look carefully at the WCR.	Determine what, at first, seems to be the writer's goal Create an agenda for the conference and prioritize based upon the writer's needs
Ask: What is your main point or argument? If the writer begins to read the thesis, ask him to look away and paraphrase. Write these words down, to refer to later.	<i>Provide the writer with a chance to rethink what the argument is or should be</i> <i>Show the writer that his ideas are important</i>
Ask: Would you read your draft aloud? Tell the writer you will take notes on what she says and ask questions afterwards.	<i>Provide the writer with an opportunity to revisit the draft, rethink it in the light of hearing it</i> <i>Provide an attentive reader for the piece</i> <i>Assure the writer that what you are writing down is not criticism, but notes and questions</i>
If the writer feels awkward about reading, offer to read for him. Ask him to note parts he wants to change.	<i>Show the writer that reading aloud is an important revision strategy</i> <i>Give the writer a chance to hear his writing in another voice</i>
Before the writer reads, ask "What would you like me to listen for?" After the writer reads, ask "Now that you've heard your paper, what do you want to do to revise it?"	<i>Give the writer a chance to rethink the categories she/he checked on the WCR</i> <i>Provide an additional opportunity for the writer to self-assess</i>

The writer has now experienced incremental opportunities for self assessment.

HIGHER-ORDER CONCERNS COME FIRST

Okay, you've started the session with questions, you've taken notes, and the writer has read her paper aloud. Now what do you do? One way to create the right atmosphere is for you first to comment on something you like in the paper (and this is a major contrast between the work of tutors and what editors do). We all want praise, and the writers with whom you'll work make themselves quite vulnerable by sharing their writing with you. However, don't push it. Writers will know if you're being phony and will feel patronized. But there's generally something good in every piece of writing. Find it. If words fail you, you can comment (if this is true), "Wow. You've really done a lot of work on this." Or "You've really done a good job of finding research sources," or "Great topic." But only say those things if they're true for you.

As we mentioned in talking about the writing process, one of the most important things you can do as a tutor is to deal first with what Thomas Reigstad and Donald MacAndrew call higher-order concerns. As a tutor, you'll save grammar and correctness for later (and, as we noted in Chapter 2, we'll call these matters later-order concerns). Higher-order concerns are the big issues in the paper, ones that aren't addressed by proofreading or editing for grammar and word choice. This isn't to say that proofreading isn't important for writers to learn, but we can tell you that, from our experience, if we help writers proofread first, a lot of writers—especially those who are inexperienced or hesitant—won't want to change anything in their papers, even to make things better, because they feel that once they have their sentences and punctuation right, all will be well with their writing (and perhaps you felt this way as well at some point in your writing history).

When dealing with higher-order concerns, you'll think about such questions as these.

- Is the writer really addressing the assignment and fulfilling its terms?
- Is there a need for a thesis, and if so, is there one?
- Do arguments have the support they need? Is there an organization I can relate to as a reader? Is this piece addressing an audience in an effective way?
- Does the piece show appropriate levels of critical thinking?

In the ideal world (where writing tutors would be out of a job!), we'd answer these questions with yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes. But quite often the answer is no, and then we have a focus for our session.

Let's say the draft has some problems that the questions above will identify. As an editor, you would tell the writer what to do. You'd tell the

writer that she needs a thesis, and maybe you'd suggest one to her. You might even write one for her. But that's not necessarily what's best for the writer.

In his well-known essay "The Idea of a Writing Center," Stephen North says, "[I]n a writing center the object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed. . . . [O]ur job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (438). As we pointed out, you're probably already a good editor and might have lots of good ideas for ways to improve the papers you'll be seeing, but it's better for the writer if she makes the decisions about the paper. Making decisions gives the writer a better sense of ownership of the paper and more pride in it when revisions go well. This emphasis on ownership will prompt us to ask questions not only about the paper in question, but about the writer's processes of composing:

- How many drafts has she written?
- What kind of revising has she done?
- Have any classmates or her teacher read any of the drafts and offered any advice?
- How does she feel about the advice?
- What are her revising strategies? (Does she have any?)

Some students who come to the writing center have never really revised a paper and have no idea how to go about rethinking a subject or even how to move paragraphs around. You need to find out how comfortable the writer is with these moves. Sometimes it's good to save the questions about revising for the end of the session when the writer has a better sense that she may need to make some sweeping changes.

If we see an organization that seems odd to us, we might ask the writer, "What made you put this section on X right here between this section on A and this one on B?" When we ask such questions, we're showing the writer that we trust her decisions. Maybe there's a connection that we didn't see. If we didn't see it, and the writer explains it, we can ask if some sort of explanation or clarification belongs in the draft, or what's more likely, the writer will say, "Oh, I need to make that clear, don't I?"

There are lots of good questions we can keep handy for tutorials. One of the best ones was a suggestion of one of our tutors, Dan Giard. Dan always likes to ask, right after the writer has read the draft, "Now that you hear it again, what do you want to do with it next?" This keeps the writer in the role of expert (and after all, she's likely to have done plenty of research on her topic; if not, and if it's needed, you need to ask more questions about the content). Another good question starts with a thumbnail sketch of the organization of the essay as you heard it and as you took notes about it. Then, the question is simply, "Is this what you wanted me to get out of your paper?"

These questions show that we trust the writer and the writer's decisions. We're not trying to take over the writing process. We're trying to help the writer see what kinds of questions she should be asking of her own paper. If we model these questions for the writer, then it's our hope that next time, she will ask them herself.

ANOTHER CONTRAST: CONVERSATION AND QUESTIONS

What does the ideal session, the totally textbook session look like? It would look like two peers having a *conversation* about writing, where each is equally likely to ask a question, move the conversation forward or point out his or her confusion as a reader. (We'll accept that these two peers are unequal in their expertise, but that's probably true in most conversations.) The tutor might be asking questions but not in the role of the teacher drawing the right answers out of the writer. Muriel Harris says of conferences with teachers, "When a student in a writing conference mistakenly thinks the teacher has the answers, all real thought ceases while the student begins searching or guessing for answers the teacher will accept" (62). We believe this is often the case with tutors as well. Nick Carbone sums this up well in a discussion on WCenter, a computer listserv for writing center directors and tutors:

Question-asking the wrong way can become a kind of inquisition. Very often tutors ask questions in the hopes of leading the writer to some "right" answer. . . . But some tutors are just really good at question placement in the context of conversation. So there are the get-to-know/ice-breaker/context questions . . . : about the assignment, dates due, purpose of the essay, and so on (and you don't always need to ask these up front, it can trickle in as needed). But the real trick is moving to a conversation about the writing, where as a tutor you can talk to the writer, be a good listener, hear the ideas, ask questions about those the way an interested friend will ask questions about some event you're telling them about. Part of that means talking with the writer about the idea, sharing opinions, disagreeing, agreeing, thinking of examples, the way people do when they get together and talk about things.

So what are the right and wrong ways of asking questions? Ask questions only if you really want to know the answer. This might mean letting go of an answer you may *think* you know and trusting the writer to know a good answer. You may ask, "Why did you choose to put this section here?" The writer is still going to hear this question as "This doesn't belong here." She may ask, "Should I move it?" You can then rephrase the question: "Is there

a good reason why it belongs here?" That allows her to assert that indeed it does but that maybe she needs to show the reader why.

There are all kinds of questions that work well and that don't have canned answers. Content-clarifying questions can be important: "What does this term mean?" "What is this paragraph's function?" Overall, avoid questions that put the writer in the position of trying to guess the answer that's in your head; those sorts of closed questions are usually not at all productive.

Sometimes, though, questions are not the best route. Let's imagine that you see a major weakness in a paper; for example, the paper is not fulfilling the requirements of the assignment. This is probably not a good time to ask a question. You might ask to see the assignment sheet again, and in a way this is a kind of question that indicates your concern. But there's no law against saying, "I'm concerned about the way your paper addresses the assignment." This kind of statement puts you in a position of expert, but at the same time shows the writer honest respect. There might be all kinds of leading questions that might get the writer to see this problem himself, but those kinds of questions would be somewhat transparent or might seem manipulative and might erode the trust you build with the writer when you withhold expert knowledge. Instead, you and the writer could get right to work on that most pressing problem. Then new questions will move the session forward.

WHAT IF THERE'S NO ESSAY?

If you've had any experience with a writing center (maybe you've visited yours as a writer already), you know that not all sessions start with a draft of a paper. Writing center directors do a lot of public relations trying to let writers know that the earlier in the process they come in, the better they are helped. You probably know from your own experience how helpful it is to talk over your assignments with your friends, classmates, or instructors before you ever do any writing. And once you start writing, you know how your ideas can take shape if you just take time to talk them over again. This is another kind of help we offer as tutors and that contrasts with the work of editors.

A good way to begin such a session as this is to have the writer paraphrase the assignment for you. This will give you a good sense of how well he knows what's expected of him. If he's stumbling around and pulls out an assignment sheet, that could mean he's having a hard time just understanding what's expected. You can help here, looking over the sheet with him, asking questions about the assignment, and encouraging him to clarify any ambiguous points with his instructor.

You know from your own experience that you'll write the best papers on topics you care about, so it's good to help the writer identify parts of the assignment that are meaningful or that draw from his life experiences in some way or that touch on subjects he may be interested in as he plans his career. Sometimes writers find topics that simply fascinate them, and they will write well about them, because they want to know more and because they want to share what they know.

Sometimes writers come to us with a lack of trust in their own perceptions of things. Many schools begin with an assignment that asks them to relate their experiences, giving such directions as "Write about a time when writing went really well for you" or "Describe an experience that changed you." Inexperienced writers can be very uncomfortable with those assignments, because many of them have been taught "Never use first person," or "Never give your opinion. Just the facts." They have to unlearn these rules, and talking about the assignment can help them warm up to these writing tasks. The research paper will come soon enough in most schools.

As we pointed out in Chapter 2, there are many ways that you can help writers generate material or figure out what it is they want to say. We like to help writers get their first thoughts and preconceptions out of the way by writing them down. (Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff call this Loop Writing.¹) Now you can point your questions toward refinements of those first thoughts. Lots of beginning writers will go with those first thoughts and use them for a paper topic; however, for most college assignments, this won't be good enough. They will probably be common knowledge, certain to put the instructor to sleep. As a tutor, you can ask the writer what interests him most about those ideas he's generated already. What would he like to know more about? Does he know how to find good research sources? Or does the assignment call for him to write about his own experiences?

HELPING WITH LATER-ORDER CONCERNS

Imagine that all those higher-order concerns are fine in a writer's draft, but there are some errors. Or imagine that you've already spent a session or two on the higher-order concerns and can now address later-order concerns. How do you know there are errors if you've only listened to the writer read the paper? Chances are that you don't, unless you heard some awkward

¹They then have writers develop either moments, stories, or portraits, then generate some dialogue; then they have them vary their audience or chronology; and then they have them think of lies, errors, or sayings about the topic. Some of these techniques will be more valuable than others, depending on the assignment.

sentences (the ones that just didn't make sense to you) and unless you heard the writer misuse some words. To address later-order concerns, you have to *see* the paper. We suggest that you sit next to the writer for this process, and *you're* going to reread the essay, perhaps now reading one sentence or paragraph at a time. Once again, we're going to trust the writer. Maybe this time you'll read the paper aloud as you both look it over, but instead of going all the way through it, you'll stop when you spot an error or think you do. In your editor role, you'd have corrected the error. But tutors have better ways of helping students, ways that make them better writers.

Many sentence-level problems are not the result of a writer's carelessness or lack of understanding about correctness. All of us will often write confusing sentences when we're trying to convey ideas that are particularly complex or only partially formed in our minds, or when we're writing in ways that we're really not familiar with (as in writers who tell us, "I've never written a critique essay and have no idea how to approach it"). Few writers get it right the first time, but many have the capability to correct their sentence-level problems with your help; rather than acting as an editor, you'll be teaching writers techniques so they can become good editors. An example of this technique is to say, "There's a sentence in the middle, in that paragraph about . . . that confuses me. Could you paraphrase it for me?" Write down what the writer says. Chances are that the paraphrase will be clear, because there's a clear context for it and a specific audience (you) that makes it easier for the writer. Then you can give feedback: "I really understood what you just said." Show the writer what you wrote down—and be sure not to correct or to add your own words to it, but keep it in the writer's own words. You might ask about the writing process at this stage and see if the writer can reflect a bit on what was going on during the composition of the unclear sentence. Sometimes she will be able to see what she needs to do to make things clearer.

For a writer whose entire paper was full of unclear sentences, we've tape-recorded the entire tutoring session. She'd read a sentence, paraphrase it, and move on quickly, and we then loaned her the tape. Writers are very grateful for that kind of help.

ERROR ANALYSIS

We often find that new tutors are most terrified by the idea of a writer's paper that is just full of errors. Where do you start? Well, as we've emphasized, you start with higher-order concerns, but there will come a time when you'll need to help writers work to correct those repeated errors and become better editors of their own work. Composition researchers such as Mina Shaughnessy and David Bartholomae have given

us a great deal of insight into the study of errors that writers make. Most important, you need to view errors not as manifestations of carelessness or sloth or stupidity but instead as stages in any writer's development. So what does this mean for you as a tutor? Well, trying to understand the logic behind a writer's errors is perhaps the most important help you can offer. While editors wield red pens and circle errors like stains on the page, tutors try to get at the reasons why writers made the choices they did. This process isn't particularly different from the way you addressed higher-order concerns. You asked what the writer already knew about the sort of essay she had to write or you asked about why she ordered the paragraphs in the manner she did or chose particular details, and then you tried to build upon that prior knowledge. With error analysis, you'll take the same approach to comma use or subject-verb agreement or sentence boundaries. Your most powerful question for the writer is, "Why did you make that choice?"

One other important strategy in error analysis is to look for patterns. As you read through the essay, perhaps a paragraph at a time, you can look for certain types of errors that the writer makes repeatedly. A common example is a comma splice or two independent clauses joined with only a comma (and we've also found that writers are often quite aware of the types of errors they make since they've been told repeatedly that they have that problem but often aren't shown how to correct it). Imagine that you are reading the paragraph and see several instances of comma splices. Your best bet is to ask the writer, "Why did you put this comma here?" While this is sort of a leading question (and most writers will reply, "Is that wrong?"), many will explain a logic behind the comma placement, perhaps that they felt that the clauses on each side of the comma were short or closely related or that they heard a pause at that spot and thought the rule with commas was to put one wherever they paused in their writing. Sometimes a writer will have memorized rules that are wrong.

At that point, you would tell him that it's an error, let's say, to put a comma alone between independent clauses. You may need to explain the idea of the independent clause to him, perhaps looking the concept up in the handbook that your writing center most commonly uses. Referring to the handbook is a good idea if you know something is wrong but don't have the answer at your fingertips, and it also models a behavior we want writers to imitate: to go for the handbook and look up the rule.

In more step-by-step form, error analysis looks like the following:

1. You see an error. First, you want to know if the writer spots it and can correct it. So you ask, "Do you see an error in this sentence?" Chances are that the writer will find and correct it without any problem. But let's say that the writer doesn't see it. Then we get to the next step.

2. Talk about the general class of errors, saying, "The problem is with your verb," or "There's a punctuation error." Give the writer time to spot it, and if he still doesn't see it, it is time for the next step.

3. Point out the error to him. "The problem is with this comma." Ask about the writer's logic behind making the error. See if he knows how to fix it. If not, ask him what rule he used to decide to put a comma where he did. As we noted above, writers often misinterpret or misapply rules. If the writer still hasn't made the correction, proceed to the next step.

4. Explain the specific rule (and refer to the handbook, as we pointed out), and have the writer apply it to his error. Help him make the fix if you need to, but explain as thoroughly as you can why you're making the choices that you made.

5. Go on to the next example of this error, but try to have the writer apply what you've taught in the previous example. And then treat each error in this fashion. For many writers, you'll soon not need even to point out the problem—they will recognize and fix the error on their own.

As you can see, error analysis can be a slow process and completely different from telling the writer what to do (as an editor would). As an effective tutor, you're having the writer do as much of the work as possible and teaching the writer the ways to correct errors. If you've noted patterns of errors, we advise you not to deal with more than three different types in a single tutoring session. That's all you'll have time and energy for, and it's all most writers can learn to correct in one session.

Another important role you can play in error analysis is not to focus just on errors but to find and point out instances where the writer has made correct choices. For instance, in the case of a writer who has a few comma splices, like the one we described previously, you then see that there is a sentence where he has punctuated two independent clauses correctly. Point it out to him. It's a process of giving positive reinforcement, not just of finding errors, and you want to maintain the good rapport you have established with the writer, not come across as a representative of the grammar police.

ENDING THE SESSION

A good session will fly by, so you'll have to be aware of time. If there's no clock where you tutor, have a watch handy. It's often a good idea to offer the writer something such as, "We have ten minutes left; do you still want to talk about the five pages we haven't looked at or is there another priority we should address?" When the time is almost up, it's a good idea to get a sense of what the writer got out of the session. "What do you plan to do

Writing Conference Record

Phone Number: _____ College: _____ Student ID: _____

Year in School (Circle) HS 1 2 3 4 5 G Other Is English your first language? Y N

E-mail: _____

Date: _____ Name: _____

First visit this year? Y N Circle: Fall/Spring

Course (e.g. Engl 001): _____ Due Date? _____

Instructor: _____

What are you working on?

What do you want to work on in this session? (check all that apply)

Discuss an assignment

Choose a topic

Get feedback on a draft

Check for development/support

Check for organization/coherence/transitions

Check research/citations

Other: _____

What are your plans for revision?

Tutor's name: _____

Tutor's comments: _____

next?" is a good question to ask. As the writer tells you, you can encourage him to write those plans down. If a lot more remains to be done, you'll want to schedule another appointment, or maybe even two, if your center allows that. Schedule those appointments with you if at all possible, because you know the assignment, you know the writer's revision plans (and you'll keep a record of that), and you'll be able to jump right into the session

without a lot of explanations. You're also building a relationship with the writer, and you want him to feel comfortable about coming back to you with this or other writing projects.

AFTER THE SESSION

Most writing centers ask you to write down some notes on the session you've just completed. Sometimes this is a note for instructors, and sometimes it's just a memo for the next tutor this writer may work with ("We worked on a paper on jet lag. We looked at his organization and he clarified for me how he meant it to be set up. He'll reorganize it, get more research, and come back on Wednesday"). Always be aware of your audience with these notes. If the writer has any access to them, be sure there are no notes you'd be embarrassed to have him see. You'll have to be sure you leave time to do this between sessions, because believe it or not, after three sessions with writers, you're likely to have forgotten a lot about the first two.

WRITING CENTER ETHICS

To sum up this chapter, we want to point out that while its content comes from our own experiences as writers, tutors, and writing center directors, it also comes from our ethics of tutoring. We don't use the word *ethics* lightly. Ethics are usually associated with values and morals, a sense of right and wrong, a framework for behavior. In tutoring writing, ethics are synonymous with responsible conduct. For instance, as a tutor you're responsible to yourself, to the writers with whom you work, to your tutor colleagues, to your writing center director or equivalent, to your writing center itself, to your school, and even to the writing center field. Your conduct in any single session can have an impact on these various interested parties. For instance, showing up late to your tutoring shift can affect your own standing in the eyes of your director and of the writer signed up to meet with you, your colleagues' opinion of you, and your writing center's reputation. As a tutor, your responsible conduct has a ripple effect, demonstrating to all parties with a stake in the matter that the work you do is meaningful.

Your responsible conduct also has larger meaning, particularly in the contrast between tutors and editors. When we remind you that writers should own their texts or that tutors shouldn't simply clean up writers' texts and then hand them back as if they were dry cleaners, we show certain values and responsibilities that imbue writing center work. Your work as a tutor will require an ethical code, a conscious system of behav-

ior that is reasoned, thoughtful, and responsible. And this code includes not only local responsibilities (for instance, treating all writers and colleagues with respect, fulfilling your job's duties, not using the writing center as a dating service!), but responsibilities that you now bear as a member of the writing center field. After all, we want our work to be taken seriously by those outside of our field. Responsible conduct—and continual discussion and examination of those responsibilities—is essential to this goal.

EDITORS VERSUS TUTORS—A SUMMARY

What we've described about the tutoring process is very different from what went on in the TV lounge of your residence hall as those friendly neighborhood editors went about their business. We'll end by summarizing the contrast between tutors and editors:

<i>Editors</i>	<i>Tutors</i>
Focus on the text	Focus on the writer's development and establish rapport
Take ownership of the text	Make sure the writer takes ownership
Proofread	Start with higher-order concerns and worry about correctness last
Give advice	Ask questions
Read silently	Ask the writer to read aloud
Look mainly for things to improve	Comment on things that are working well
Work with an ideal text	Trust the writer's idea of a text
Make corrections on the page	Keep hands off and let writers make corrections; help them learn correctness
Tell writers what to do	Ask them their plans for revision

4

EXAMINING EXPECTATIONS

When you attend a class, what do you consider to be your responsibilities? To arrive on time? To be prepared? To take notes in response to what your teacher says or writes? And what do you consider to be your teacher's responsibilities—also to arrive on time and be prepared? To stimulate learning? To respect you and your fellow students? Where do you believe your expectations for these responsibilities come from?

Just as in classrooms, in writing center sessions, you and the writers with whom you'll work bring expectations about each of your responsibilities, and each of you will also bring goals for the session. When goals and expectations reasonably agree, the work of the tutorial can go on relatively smoothly. When the goals and expectations clash, however, you're left feeling pretty awful. Something didn't work. Was it your fault? The writer's fault?

In this chapter, we focus on the goals and expectations that you will undoubtedly bring to your tutoring (and to your observation of others' tutoring) and how your preconceived notions about many of the contrasts that define tutoring—tutor versus editor, peer versus teacher, writer versus writing—are powerful influences that you and writers might not even be aware of. We'll discuss how those expectations might have been formed and why it's necessary to reflect deeply on what has shaped your expectations for behavior. In particular, we'll focus on two powerful influences: (1) your culturally based expectations for the rules of communication and (2) your influential teaching/learning experiences. We will also introduce you to Adria, a graduate student in applied linguistics and a writing center tutor. We'll describe how Adria's expectations for effective tutoring—largely the result of

her student experiences—manifested themselves in her sessions as a fairly nonflexible approach and became a source of nonproductive tutoring.

We need to stress that it is perfectly natural for your experiences to guide the expectations you'll bring to tutoring. This is a key process in learning. Here's how linguist Deborah Tannen puts it:

The only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow up and live in a given culture. (14)

However, it would not be ideal for your connection between old and new to turn into inflexible rules and summary judgments; rather, you can listen, observe, and reflect thoughtfully about the contrast. Our goal in this chapter is for you to develop control and flexibility, that important contrast we described in regard to your writing process. Becoming an effective tutor will often mean transcending your expectations and opening up communication so that you and the writer have a clear sense of what you both can accomplish in a session, as well as how and why.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

We all have cultural expectations for behavior, particularly those that have to do with communication (and we use culture here to refer to those influences based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and class). It is quite likely that many writers you'll work with will not share your cultural experiences or will attach different value than you do to certain kinds of behavior. Whether this means a writer who refuses to make eye contact or one who sits closer than is comfortable for you, it is essential that you not condemn these behaviors simply because they are different from what you value. Instead, you need to reflect upon what you're observing and why you're making certain interpretations and judgments.

Observation and reflection are not the only things tutoring requires, however. After all, you will be a participant in the activity that occurs. You will be enacting the social rules that govern all interaction. As an example, consider a conversation you've had recently with a friend. Both you and your friend have internalized the various rules each of you follows to ensure that your conversation flows along, isn't too awkward, and achieves the goals each of you has (for example, to learn or shape some new information or to solidify your friendship). These rules include those involving turn-taking (and you probably have had conversations where two people spoke at once—not very productive!) and maintaining the topic or at least

moving on to tangents with some sense of agreement. Consider the verbal cues you or your friend might have used to signal that the other should keep talking ("Uh huh," "Yeah," "I know what you mean") and the verbal signals to indicate it's the other person's turn to speak ("That reminds me of something I needed to tell you," "What do you think of that?"). Many years of conversations within particular cultures have made these rules something you don't even think about—except when they are violated.

In a tutoring session, social rules for the interaction apply just as much as for conversations (and we'll supply much more depth on how to analyze the discourse of a session in Chapter 10). As a tutor, you need to pay particular attention to the rules of behavior that you and the writer seem to be relying upon. For writers new to the writing center, meeting with a tutor might be more like meeting with a classroom teacher than with a peer, and their behaviors might position you as much more of an authority figure than you might expect. Or, perhaps, the opposite might occur, and the writer might approach your session much more casually than you would wish. In either case, both you and the writer have certain expectations for behavior, expectations that arise out of your experiences with similar situations.

Instances of cross-cultural communication can particularly mark clashes between expectations for social rules. After all, your notions of the right way to act in a social situation are largely products of your culture, and you won't always share cultural expectations with writers. That does not mean that your tutorial with a writer from a culture different from your own will be marked by awkwardness, confusion, and frustration. Instead, our point is that as an effective tutor, you need to try to understand why some interactions simply do not feel right—including sessions you just observe and those you play a part in. When you hear a fellow tutor come out of a writing center session saying, "That really didn't go well. We just didn't click," think about the sort of clues—both verbal and physical—that you could observe to explain that feeling. Just as in conversation, a host of other factors play an important role in tutoring sessions, such as who speaks when and who controls the topic, how you and the writer sit in relation to one another, where the writer's paper is positioned, and the noise level in the room.

A QUESTION OF GOALS

Expectations for the rules of interaction are just one influence on the outcome of your sessions. You and the writers will also bring goals for your sessions, and one of the many tricky parts of tutoring is not only uncovering your own goals (which aren't always as visible as you think), but negotiating with the writer on a mutually agreeable goal. This agenda setting during the first five minutes of a session is perhaps the most crucial of all. A

typical clash of goals occurs when the writer is interested primarily in getting his paper fixed (and, after all, who can blame writers for wanting better papers to be the result of their writing center sessions? After all, that's primarily how they're being graded in their classes!). The tutor, on the other hand, is primarily interested in improving the student as a *writer*, with less of an emphasis on the *writing*, as Stephen North told us a while back. Yes, it's that editor versus tutor contrast again.

Consider the writer's perspective. If his main goal were to improve his paper, then his expectations for what you might do as tutor would be to make the corrections. After all, you're the writing expert, and the end result would be much better if he were able to have you don your scrubs and perform a quick surgery on his ailing prose. However, as we have stressed up to this point, writing centers are not about editing. We are about teaching and maintaining a much larger view than correcting the immediate paper; our goals for sessions are to help the writer learn the skills needed to improve not just this paper but subsequent papers. So, do our long-term, process-oriented goals clash with writers' short-term, product-oriented goals? At times, yes, and one of your frequent tasks as a tutor will be to teach writers just what the writing center does and why a long-term view makes sense.

One important word about goals, however: It won't always be clear what a writer's goals are, and you will need to work toward clarification. Consider the following list of actual requests writers issued at the start of sessions, often in response to the tutor's questions, "What can I help you with?" or "Why don't you tell me what you're working on?"

"Well, I'm doing this paper on the construction of the pyramids for my archeology class, and basically I wrote it, and I guess my grammar and my word structure is not good enough. So I need a proofreader, and they advised me to come [here]."

"If you could check the grammar?"

"Basically, [focus on] the usage of words or idioms. Also, I have difficulty using the definite article *the*, also some other articles, *a* or *the*."

"Well, just go through it, and, I mean, for punctuation. You don't have to correct it; just point out whether it's, like, punctuation mistakes but mainly both grammatical and sentence structure."

"Look for grammar and misspellings, but see if you understand what I'm trying to say."

"I want to know about the overall organization and maybe some expressions that I may not have used correctly in this paper."

"I want to see what flows."

"I wanted to see what you think."

"One of the things that I'm having a problem with is writing a book review; I've never really done a book review. I've also been under some personal issues I've been dealing with and trying to write this at the same time. I'm concerned about just the overall clarity and construction . . . and also if there happens to be grammatic stuff going on."

"I don't know how this works, so you should tell me how it works and then I'll just follow your lead because I've never been here before."

What would your reply be to these varied requests? After all, writers don't necessarily know the vocabulary of tutoring, and a grammar check request might mean a host of agenda items. Our point here is for you to be aware of the goals you and writers bring to tutoring sessions, to think about where the expectations for those goals might come from, and to scrutinize the language used to express those goals.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Whatever your goals might be for a session, you have some expectations for what your responsibilities are to achieve those goals. In time, these expectations will come from study and practice into the art of tutoring writing, but before you're able to have those experiences, your expectations might be informed by factors you're not even quite aware of. We discussed cultural issues previously, and in the next section we present the powerful influence of your learning experiences. One factor related to both of these influences has to do with your perception of the relationship between tutors and writers. Who should be in control of the agenda? Who should be asking the questions? Who should control the flow of the session and be attentive to time and topic? Your answers to these questions all come from some source, some expectation for who should do what in a tutoring session. Literacy theorist James Gee and his colleagues believe that face-to-face interactions such as tutoring can be controlled by the participants' "ideologies" or "largely unconscious values and viewpoints within social activities that have implications for the distribution of power" (238). Being "largely unconscious," these ideologies are rarely critiqued; instead, many of us just express certain beliefs as the right way to do things. In tutoring, your attitudes toward the distribution of power will have a great influence on what occurs in your sessions.

Perhaps those power relationships are most clearly manifested through your beliefs about who is responsible for what in a session. Here's

how some of the tutor trainees at Marquette answered the question, "In a tutoring session, what are the responsibilities of writers?" As you read these responses, consider not only which you agree with, but more important, why.

From Jessica:

Writers should be attentive, open to new ideas, be willing to change and establish new habits. They must be sincere in their intentions. Writers as well as tutors must be good listeners.

From Adele:

The writer has the responsibilities of being a critical thinker and an honest person. If either tutor or writer does not understand something, then they [should] ask. Honesty and clarity are what makes the whole equation work. The writer also must be open-minded, as well as the tutor, and willing to consider different approaches to writing.

From Kristina:

The writer is responsible for making the paper what he or she wants to make it. He or she accomplishes this by engaging in conversation with the tutor about the paper. Answering the questions the tutor asks, critically thinking about the paper as the discussion moves along, and writing things down along the way.

From Angela:

The students should not totally rely on the tutors to get the wheels churning in their minds. Students should come with their best draft, so that progress can be made. Also, they should be able to answer questions [such as] what they like about the paper, what they don't like, etc. This way, even if they don't know exactly what they want to do with the paper, they know what should stay, or what should change.

From Jason:

The writer must be an active part in the tutoring process. The writer cannot expect to be a "mental sponge" and absorb all the information from the tutor. Instead, the tutor and the writer must work as a team to achieve the desired results (the improvement of the writer).

From Aesha:

The writer is responsible to utilize the skills already present in him/herself. He/she must be willing to try something different, move out of the comfort zone. He/she must recognize the fact that the tutor is someone who can help him/her do what he/she already knows how to do and not do it for them.

Each of the trainees describes a fairly active role for the writer, one that reciprocates the hard work that the tutor is demonstrating and one that is in the writer's best interests. However, think in broader terms where these expectations might have come from. Are they products of value systems? Of culture? How are they confounded when a writer has a very different sense of personal distance or politeness or authority, as many writers from countries outside of the United States (or from a different culture than yours) will have? And how empowered are some writers to own their texts in the face of poorly conceived assignments or dull course work? Do many writers have a voice outside of the writing center to register meaningful protest, or is there something about their schooling that they are unhappy with?

Even in the writing center, writers don't necessarily have the same rights and obligations as tutors. We think Andy explained this dilemma well in his response to the question of writers' responsibilities:

I realize more and more students are aware of the way the writing center works, so their expectations are being met more and more often. However, students are not part of this dialogue about what their responsibilities are, what tutors expect of them, so how can they be prepared to meet expectations?

Andy nicely makes our point here. A variety of influences will determine just what you believe your and the writers' responsibilities are to be. However, it's important that you give writers a voice in determining how a session is run. Certainly, we all cringe at those requests for proofreading or grammar checking, but we caution you to look beyond those convenient labels (or at least investigate why the writers are issuing these sorts of requests).

A March 8, 1996, posting to the Internet discussion list WCenter, read by more than 350 writing center directors and tutors, provides another example for potentially mismatched expectations about responsibilities. Janet Mittendorf proposed the following definition of the effective tutor:

The effective writing tutor knows how to spot and help improve the most important problems in a written piece, how to keep the conference

focused and productive, how to support the tutee's efforts while indicating areas ripe for improvement in the writing, and how to quickly forge a strong, professional bond with tutees in order to motivate long-term improvements in their writing processes.

At first reading, you'll probably find much of this description quite reasonable. But on closer examination, consider how several of these items could be quite different, depending on one's perspective (and expectations). On one level there would be difficulty in agreeing on the "most important problems in a written piece," in imagining what a "focused and productive" conference would look like, and in describing abstract qualities such as "support" and a "professional bond." On another level, embedded in this definition are expectations for what each of these abstract characteristics might be and expectations for the goals and responsibilities tutors should adhere to in order to achieve this effectiveness.

So have we hopelessly complicated tutoring at this point? We hope not. Instead, we want you to give careful thought to why you feel as you do about what writers and tutors should or should not do. Being reflective is the key here. But before we end, we need to add one more major influence on the expectations you'll bring to tutoring writing.

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS

Consider for a moment who your most influential teachers have been or those particularly powerful teaching/learning scenes that are etched in your memory (and those can be positive and negative). We often remember teachers who convinced us that we had something to say or demanded clearer and clearer prose or who filled our drafts with red ink.

Now think about how you would go about helping someone else learn to write—the advice you would give, the style of feedback, the strategies you'd endorse. In the chapter on the writing process, we cautioned against simply applying what works for you to another's situation. In the same way, we want to caution applying (or immediately avoiding) those teaching and learning experiences that you see so clearly in your mind's eye. Here's how Shantel, a student at Marquette, described how her views of tutoring writing were formed:

I guess I have viewed tutoring in terms of power, that is, the tutor being the authority figure while the tutee submissively sits back watching the red pen marks disfigure his/her creation. This scene always seems to take place in a room with an imposing gray desk cluttered with papers, and for some strange reason *my* paper would always be

lost among that heap. I never thought of tutoring defined in the terms of my friend who lived next door to me freshman year, nor did I really have a clue that the writing center tutors would be figures of lesser authority than my high school English teacher—who just happened to be a retired naval officer.

For Shantel, tutoring originally meant teaching in an authoritative, all-controlling way; hence, the contrast between tutors and teachers (or at least stereotypes of teachers!).

We don't mean to cast cynical doubt upon your experiences—after all, they might have been very effective for you. However, to simply apply those techniques in a different context can often be a frustrating experience for you and for the writer. Instead, you need to reflect deeply upon what some of your more influential learning experiences have been and think about the many factors that surrounded your experience and determined success (or failure). Overall, you need to listen and observe in a tutoring session and ask yourself why you're acting in certain ways and where your actions are coming from.

In the same way, the writers with whom you'll work will have expectations for how you should act, expectations that come from *their* influential learning experiences. You will need to counter these expectations, open up lines of communication, and try to understand why writers are positioning you in certain ways.

For an example of the influence of one's learning experiences on her tutoring and the need to develop both control and flexibility as a tutor, we now introduce you to Adria. A writing tutor and a graduate student in applied linguistics, Adria had been an undergraduate dual major in biology and English and also had worked as a peer tutor. As you'll see, Adria has calm control over the writing strategies she passes along and hopes to help writers develop that control as well; however, in terms of flexibility, Adria often dispenses the same strategy to each writer, without regard for the particulars of that writer's process, task, or context for writing. Adria's impulse is good; after all, her goals are to increase a writer's strategic repertoire. However, as you'll see, her technique needs to be refined; there are limits to handing out the same strategies for each writer you encounter.

In a series of interviews, Adria talked about the influence of her student experiences on what she does as a writing tutor: "Some of the most fabulous professors I've had . . . shaped the way I write papers still today and the way that I teach my students to write." While listening to an audiotape of one of her sessions, Adria described that what she does involves "the whole notion of being systematic and explaining how I do these things and pass[ing] them along. That's what my professors have done for me, so I'm trying to do it for the student now."

In tutoring sessions that Adria tape-recorded, her approach often involved dispensing strategies as “hints” and “tricks.” Adria would diagnose a problem in the writer’s text, tell the writer of a helpful “trick” to fix that problem, and then show the writer how to apply that technique. As she told one writer during a session: “I’ll tell you, you’ve come to the right place. I am Miss Shortcut. If there is a shortcut to be had, I’ve got it because I like to make things nice and simple.” In another session in which a writer was working on a summary of an article, Adria tells her, “Okay, what I’m going to try to do is give you a few really helpful hints to help you make this a lot easier. Don’t think that writing a summary should be difficult for somebody, and if I give you these hints, maybe it will be easier to do.” When a writer expresses trouble with keeping her tenses consistent, Adria says, “I have a really good clue for that, a nice little trick. I like to do everything in nice little tricks; it makes it nice and easy.”

For organizing ideas, Adria often prescribes using “glossing” or margin notes as a reading and revision strategy and writing an outline in order to organize ideas. For example, when giving a writer advice on composing an article summary, Adria tells her, “The best way to take care of this is as you go through each paragraph, jot down little notes in the margin, so when you go back, you don’t have to reread the article again.”

In the following example, the writer has drafted a memo recommending that a company purchase a piece of machinery. Adria models the margin-note strategy, summing up each paragraph of the writer’s memo in a word or two in order to examine its structure. She elicits these summaries by rapidly questioning the writer on his chosen organizational pattern. As you read these transcript excerpts, keep in mind that they are written-down speech; thus, it might be best for you to read them aloud or, even better, read them with a partner, treating them as a script:

Adria: Okay, what did you mean by this part right here?

Writer: That’s why the company should purchase the machine.

Adria: Okay, where do you tell the company to purchase the machine?

Writer: Up here.

Adria: Okay, where were you going to put the pros and cons?

Writer: In the middle.

Adria: Okay, why? Aren’t they kind of scattered?

Writer: Yeah they are [writer laughs].

Adria: Okay, that’s really what the problem is here. I think what you have to do is structure it a little bit more. So in this first part, what do you say?

Writer: Well, I said the company is not in good health.

Adria: Exactly. And you’re very clear here. You have your numbers. You have your data and everything. So this is not in good health, we’ll put that in the margin. [Adria writes] Okay? Now here, you’re saying what? Your recommendation is to buy this machine.

Writer: Yeah.

Adria: Okay, “buy machine” here. And what are you saying down here? They should buy the machine.

Writer: Yeah, they should buy the machine. And in the middle, why they should buy the machine.

Adria: Okay, why they should buy the machine.

Writer: Well, the last one is the conclusion of something in the middle.

Adria: Okay. Where are you going to put the pros and cons? And here is not an option, right? Because you have “you should buy the machine,” “why you should buy the machine,” and “why you should buy the machine” as the conclusion.

Writer: After that.

Adria: Okay, exactly. So you need a whole new paragraph here.

This excerpt displays Adria’s offering and modeling a specific strategy and reinforcing the use of that strategy. She asks for the writer’s intentions by questioning and then evaluating the writer’s memo with very specific comments (“Aren’t they kind of scattered?” “So you need a whole new paragraph here”). Often these techniques will lead to Adria writing an outline or drawing a graphic that she will give writers at the end of the session.

In the next example, Adria is working with a different writer whose task was to summarize an article on funding mechanisms for brain-injured students. At the following point in the session, Adria sums up a series of her questions and the writer answers to discern the gist of the article:

Adria: So let’s make up a little trick because this can get kind of confusing. [Adria writes on a separate piece of paper] So because there’s no agreement, there is no definition. Because there is no definition, there is no money. And

because there is no money, there is no help. So this is kind of what happens. They're trying to tell you, and there's a little bit of a discrepancy here because they're trying to tell you, "Well there's no help because there's no definition," and in reality there's no help because there's no money. And there's no money because there's no definition. So they're leaving that step out. Does that make sense?

Writer: Yeah.

Adria: Because this is all stuff you've told me; I'm just laying it all out for you. Okay, so you want to talk about this whole argument probably. "Well this is a big problem. There is no help. The reason there is no help is because . . ." Does this make sense?

Writer: Mmm, hmm.

Adria: Okay, I'm just recapping everything that you've told me, and I'm just organizing it.

In this exchange Adria plays a directive role in producing a coherent narrative for the writer ("So let's make up a little trick because this can get kind of confusing") while phrasing the results as a joint effort ("I'm just recapping everything that you've told me, and I'm just organizing it") and frequently checking the writer's understanding ("Does this make sense?").

In many ways, Adria's approach seems quite effective. After all, we described in Chapters 2 and 3 many strategies you can use at various points in a session. Doesn't it make sense to pass those strategies along to writers? Isn't increasing a writer's strategic repertoire aligned with the goal of focusing on her as a *writer*?

Well, yes and no. Writing center theorist Andrea Lunsford describes a model of the "Writing Center as Storehouse" which "operates as information stations or storehouses, prescribing and handing out skills and strategies to individual learners" (4). Lunsford is critical of this approach because it sets writers up as autonomous units with similar needs and ignores the collaborative nature of learning. The social nature and complexity of learning to write confound the goal of dispensing hints and tricks.

On a more obvious level, the one-size-fits-all nature of these strategies was not readily accepted by all writers. In an interview with the writer in the excerpt about funding for brain-injured students, she commented upon the usefulness of one strategy Adria endorsed. The purpose of this strategy was to overcome getting stuck while writing by saying, "Wait a minute. I'm stuck. How would I tell this to Adria? What would I say to her?" This writer noted that "I think it was easier said than done. . . . easier for her to say to me, 'Oh, do it like that.' It doesn't always work like that. . . . It's more, it's

not as easy, you can't just tell someone and write down what you want to tell them." She wondered if using "the same things per person" might not always work since "you don't know the people."

So is Adria a horrible tutor, one who will besmirch the reputation of the writing center? Certainly not, and we don't mean to bash her here. Adria is a resourceful tutor, one who has expertise in many facets of the tutoring process. However, she has very explicit, if not rigid, ideas of what her goals and responsibilities are in a session, and those ideas stem from how she feels she best learned to write. In many instances, writers gratefully appreciate being shown strategies that they can use on their own. In other instances, however, Adria's lack of flexibility won't be as effective. Adria needs to strike a balance and uncover the writer's needs more fully.

Our point for you here is to reflect on the ways of tutoring that feel right. Where do they come from? How much flows from what worked for you as a writer? Rather than merely transmit strategies or even enact practices that you've seen work in other sessions (whether that means asking questions or having the writer read aloud or any other strategy), the important thing is to approach a session with a curious and open mind and, once again, to develop control of the strategies that you might offer writers and the flexibility to know what's working in a session and what adjustments you need to make. What you'll often find to be your most important resource isn't what you can tell writers, but instead what you do instead of talking. In other words, by listening and observing, by looking at body language and uncovering what the writer is doing and why, you can continue to improve as a tutor.

We'd like you to give careful thought to the role your expectations are playing in what's happening or about to happen. Whether that means negotiating the rules of communication or holding in check the endorsement of an infallible strategy, as an effective tutor you'll need to be a careful observer and a thoughtful communicator. We never said that tutoring would be easy, but in its difficulty and complexity lie great rewards and thought-provoking experiences.