# Tutoring: the Complete Guide

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# Part 1: Getting Started

# Introduction

**Welcome, Tutor!**

Perhaps you're a full-time teacher looking to supplement your income, or a university student looking for a way to help finance your studies. Or maybe you're a musician wanting to teach in your spare time, a parent in need of flexible working hours, or a linguist hoping to put your skills to good use.

Whatever your background, private tuition is a flexible, rewarding and well-paid profession.

**This book will open your eyes to the possibilities and pitfalls of tutoring, and provide you with the knowledge and tools you'll need to become successful.**

To keep it simple, this guide is divided into two parts.

**Part 1 ('Getting Started')** gives detailed information on the practicalities of becoming a tutor: who can tutor, how to promote yourself, staying safe and dealing with the tax man.

**Part 2 ('Effective Teaching')** draws on the latest research to give in-depth guidance on what it means to be an effective tutor.

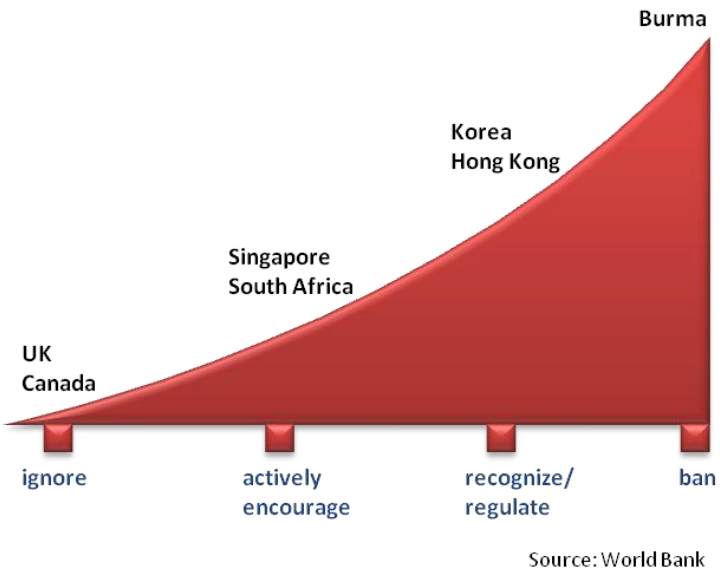
Both sections include a variety of useful templates which you can print out for your own use. Don't forget that if you're looking for information on a particular topic, you can check the contents page (p.3) to find it. Finally, don't expect to take in everything at once! We recommend that you print out this guide and use it for future reference.

**We believe that you're looking at the most straightforward and comprehensive guide to tutoring in the UK.**

**Enjoy!**

# 1.1 Tutoring Myths Dispelled

Governments around the world have become involved in varying degrees in private tuition (see right). But as far as the UK is concerned, there are few restrictions on who can work as a private tutor. Unless you've been barred from working with children, or are a foreign national with visa restrictions, you are probably within your rights to teach privately.




This is not to say, however, that there are not laws which govern the manner in which you conduct your business. For a self-employed tutor in the UK, there are regulations covering such diverse areas as:

- fair trading, trade descriptions and trading standards
- book-keeping and income tax
- health and safety
- trading names and licenses

To make sure you are compliant with the law when setting up a business, businesslink.gov.uk (the government website for businesses) and adviceguide.org.uk (the Citizens Advice Bureau website) are the best sources of general information.

This Guide looks specifically at the main areas of relevance for private tutors in the UK. Private tuition is a multi-million pound industry, and yet very little information about it is in the public domain. We'll therefore begin by taking a look at the facts, and so dispel a few of the myths surrounding this line of work.

## Myth No.1: I need to register with a tuition agency

**The Independent Private Tutor**

Throughout this Guide, the focus will be on working as an *independent private tutor* – that is, a self-employed teacher who is paid directly by the student or parent.

While the advice contained in this book will be highly relevant to all kinds of private teaching, we naturally place an emphasis on its most common forms. As a result, many of the issues and examples relate to academic or musical instrument tuition, and to the tutoring of children.

You do not have to register with a tuition agency to tutor privately, though it can be a good idea. The job of an agency is to find you students so that you don't have to market yourself. Some agencies will also provide support (for example, training or teaching materials), and there is a certain kudos to agency work which can be useful for your CV. In addition, agencies take on the responsibility of making financial arrangements with parents or students, and by law normally carry out CRB checks for their tutors (see *Myth No.2*).

Having said this, agencies have their own rules and expectations. Importantly, they will set the fee for your services, and will take a commission for every hour that you teach. Over the long term, you may feel that a direct arrangement with a family or student is more satisfactory.

The alternative to working for an agency is to work as an ***independent private tutor*** (see left). This is the method of choice for many successful and experienced tutors.

## Myth No.2: I need a 'CRB certificate' to tutor children

The so-called 'enhanced CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) disclosure certificate' is an official document which proves that there is no known reason why an individual may not work with children or vulnerable adults. By law, before an *organisation* employs someone to work with children, they have to carry out a CRB check to make sure that person is suitable.

However, possessing a CRB certificate is **not** a legal requirement if you are a self-employed tutor – although it is, of course, still a serious criminal offence to work or seek to work as a tutor while barred from working with children.

Many self-employed tutors (through their work with schools or other organisations) will already possess an up-to-date CRB certificate, and this can be useful to show to parents at the first meeting. If an organisation has not applied for a CRB on your behalf, it may still be possible for you to obtain one through an umbrella organisation. See www.completelycrb.co.uk/crb_selfemployed.htm for further details.

Obtaining a CRB certificate as an individual can be costly. A possibly useful alternative that we've recently come across is the so-called 'subject access request' through which your local police force provides you with a certificate with similar information at the cost of £10. See www.askthe.police.uk/content/Q87.htm - and let us know if you've found it a useful alternative document to show to parents.

## Myth No.3: I need qualifications and experience to be a good tutor

As far as myth-busting goes, this is probably the greatest educational myth ever. After all, who would think that qualifications and experience aren't important?

Yet the evidence suggests that this assumption is wrong. In the largest ever study commissioned by the UK government on teacher effectiveness[1], the authors concluded that,

> **"biometric data (i.e. information about a teacher's age and teaching experience, additional responsibilities, qualifications, career history and so on) did not allow us to predict their effectiveness as a teacher."**

And that,

> **"pupil progress outcomes are affected more by a teacher's skills and professional characteristics than by factors such as their sex, qualifications or experience."**

In other words, **qualifications and experience are not as important as skills and professional characteristics**. It's an extraordinary revelation.

While this finding may be of concern to parents and students, it is very encouraging for tutors, whether well-qualified and experienced or not. It means the sky's the limit, and that our own background needn't stop us becoming exceptional teachers.

[1] Hay McBer (2000) *Research into Teacher Effectiveness: A Model of Teacher Effectiveness.* Norwich: HM Stationery Office.

## In that case, what DO I need?

So far, we've seen that joining an agency, having a CRB check and possessing extensive qualifications or experience are not essential for becoming a private tutor.

The rest of this book is devoted to providing you with the information you **do** need to tutor successfully.

In the rest of **Part 1**, you'll find detailed information on:

- how to promote yourself
- how to deal with enquiries
- how to stay safe
- how to deal with the tax office

and in **Part 2** (p.27) you'll find a comprehensive guide to:

- how to be an effective teacher

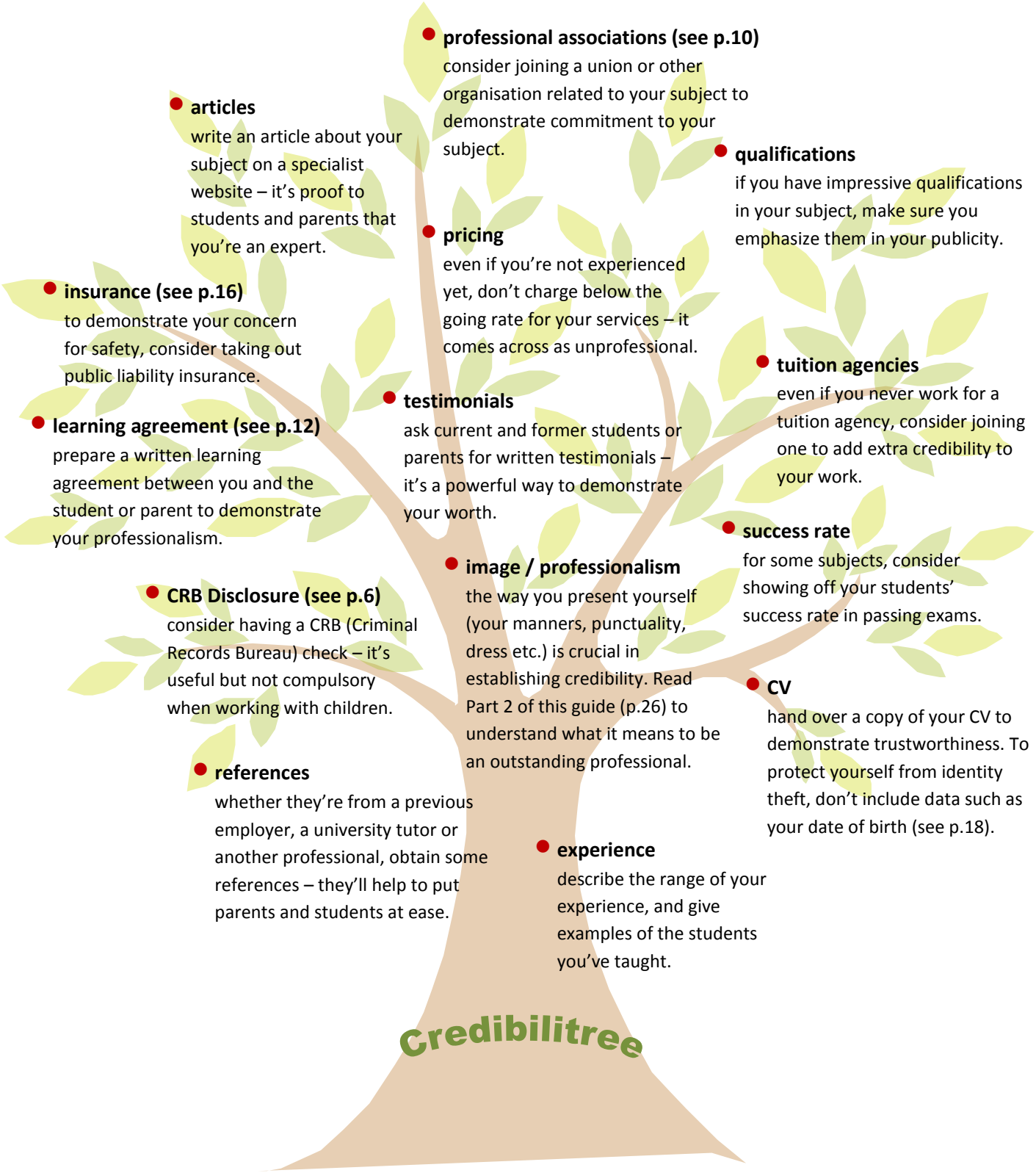
Finally, if you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to **contact The Tutor Pages** at:

- web@thetutorpages.com

# 1.2 Promoting Yourself

**Establishing Credibility**

The first step towards promoting yourself effectively is to consider how to demonstrate your credibility as a tutor with potential students and parents. As we have already mentioned, tutoring is unregulated in the UK, and so it up to you to build up a picture of yourself as a competent and reliable professional. The Tutor Pages **credibilitree** diagram shows you some of the ways you can enhance your credibility.



## A Note on Professional Associations

There are no formal qualifications you can obtain to become a private tutor, although many tutors will have a university degree in a related subject. The next best option (aside from qualifying as a classroom teacher) is to join a **professional association**. This is a good way of demonstrating your commitment to your subject, and will provide you with many other benefits besides.

Criteria for membership of associations vary, with different types of membership options often being available.

For musicians, the obvious choice is the **Musicians Union** or the **Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM).** For linguists, there is the **Chartered Institute of Linguists**.

For academic subjects, there are many organisations, such as the **Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM)**. Wikipedia has a list both of professional associations in the UK and learned societies. It is worth investigating any related societies for the subject you're interested in tutoring, and/ or joining one of the **major UK teachers unions** (see right).

Finally, if you have more than 3 years' teaching experience, you may consider joining the **Association of Tutors**, the UK's only professional body specifically for independent private tutors. More details can be found at www.tutor.co.uk.

### Joining a Teachers Union

As well as helping you demonstrate your commitment to potential students and parents, being a member of a teaching union has many advantages, including:

- free or reduced-rate professional development courses
- reduced-rate public liability and professional indemnity insurance cover (see p.16)
- free expert support and guidance
- up-to-date publications, magazines and resources
- a chance to participate in the education debate
- a variety of money-saving discounts and offers

The major teaching unions in the UK are: **ATL**, **EIS** (for Scotland), **NAHT** (for Head Teachers), **NASUWT**, **NUT, USU** (for FE and HE) and **Voice**. These unions vary in what they have to offer for private tutors. However, of most interest to private tutors is that:

- some will allow private tutors with no formal teaching qualifications to join;
- some offer vastly reduced membership prices if you're not teaching full-time.

The two teaching unions which fulfil both these criteria are **NASUWT** (www.nasuwt.org.uk) and **ATL** (www.atl.org.uk). Membership of either of these unions can cost as little as around £40.00 per year.

## Finding the Right Advertising Platform

In the past, independent tutors had to rely on placing ads in libraries, shop windows and local newspapers. The modern equivalent of such methods are the various online classifieds sites which allow tutors to advertise their services.

The disadvantage of such methods is that there is little or no opportunity for the tutor to demonstrate credibility to potential students and parents.

Some websites such as thetutorpages.com now provide a specialist platform for independent tutors to demonstrate their worth to potential students before any initial contact is made. A good online tutor advertising platform should provide facilities for tutors to describe their services, upload references, testimonials and CVs, and write articles about their expertise.

Remember, though, that wherever you advertise, you are obliged by law to describe your services truthfully and accurately (see businesslink.gov.uk or cap.org.uk (the Committee of Advertising Practice) for further details).

## Dealing with Enquiries

Before advertising as a tutor, it is a good idea to consider how you're going to respond to any enquiries. If at all possible, it's best to make initial contact with a potential student or parent by phone rather than email. Talking on the phone does a number of things. It gives you a chance to:

- secure a booking ahead of any competition;
- show that you're a real person to be trusted, not someone hiding behind technology;
- respond positively and enthusiastically, and to demonstrate your knowledge and experience;
- assess whether this is a suitable opportunity for you;
- allow the enquirer in turn to assess you.

## Are You Prepared for the Telephone Conversation?

There are of course hundreds of potential questions which a student or parent may ask, and the more experienced you become, the easier it'll be to answer them. However, thinking through your answers to questions such as the following, together with a good understanding of Part 2 of this e-book ("Effective Teaching"), should stand you in good stead.

- **Can you provide a CV or references?**
- **Do you have a CRB disclosure certificate? (see p.6)**
- **How much experience do you have?**
- **Do you set homework?**
- **Can you provide a reading list?**
- **Which study books do you recommend?**
- **How do you measure students' progress?**
- **Do you provide periodic reports on student progress?**
- **Do you help with other areas such as interview technique and CV-writing?**
- **What is your success rate?**
- **Where do you teach?**
- **Do you provide online tuition?**
- **Do you offer discounts for block bookings or concessions?**
- **Do you charge for travel?**
- **Can the parent wait in another room at your home?**
- **Can the parent watch the lesson?**
- **What values and life-skills are you trying to instil?** ***(for example, self-motivation, self-discipline, confidence, self-expression, valuing others)***
- **When does tuition normally begin for school exams?** ***(usually 3 or 4 terms before the exam itself)***
- **How many hours per week are usually necessary?** ***(usually 1 hour a week, or 2/3 hours immediately before an exam)***
- **How many hours a week should the student study at home?**
- **What are the requirements for local school entrance exams?** ***(you'll need to contact local schools to find out, see p.47)***
- **Which subjects should a child who's out of school focus on?** ***(the core subjects: Maths, English and Science)***
- **My child has Special Educational Needs (SEN), do you think tuition will help?** ***(one-to-one encouragement and helping a child to learn at their own pace is often effective. See www.nasen.org.uk for full guidance on SEN)***

## How to Make the Call

We recommend the following during the call to the student/parent.

- **find out more.** Make sure you build up a picture of the enquirer's background and motivations. 'What is your reason for being interested?' is a better question than the more direct 'Why?' question.
- **demonstrate your expertise.** Be upbeat and confident about how you can help someone ('Yes, I can help with that.'). The communications guru Andy Bounds suggests that clients are not interested in what we do, but rather what they're left with AFTER we've worked with them. It is a good idea therefore to brainstorm these 'AFTERs' – for example, after taking lessons, the student 'will have greater confidence in …', 'a stronger ability to …', 'less anxiety about…', 'more satisfaction/enjoyment in…'.
- **build rapport.** This could be the beginning of a long working relationship, so give the enquirer enough time and attention. Be friendly, listen to them and encourage them to ask questions.

- **use a booking form.** Using a booking form has several advantages. If you keep some by the phone, it'll mean that you're prepared with good questions and that you don't forget to ask something. Also, since you'll use it to record a student's contact details and other essential information, it can become the first page in any records you keep on them. A sample booking form is included on p. 14.
- **confirm the initial appointment.** Always aim to secure a booking in your first conversation. Repeat the date and time, and check they've noted it down as well as your phone number. If they're unable to book a time there and then, arrange to call again rather than leaving them to call you. Even genuinely interested people forget or don't get round to calling.
- **arrange to send additional information by email.** It is a good idea to follow up your phone call with an email in which you confirm the appointment and include useful additional information. This might include your CV, references or testimonials from satisfied students, and a map of where you live if you tutor at home. You might also wish to include a short questionnaire (see right). Finally, you should consider emailing a **learning agreement** (see below).

**Questionnaire Icebreaker**

One useful way to break the ice at the first lesson, and to collect some valuable information about the student, is to send them a short questionnaire to be filled in before the lesson. Here are some questions you may wish to include:

**For students:**

- What is your favourite subject in school? Why?
- What is your least favourite subject? Why?
- What are your own reasons for wanting one-to-one lessons?
- Do you belong to any clubs in or outside school?
- What would you like to do when you leave school?
- What subjects/ grades do you think you need for that?
- What's your favourite way of learning (listening, reading, doing, sharing with others, working alone/in groups etc)?
- If you were head teacher, what would you do?
- What do you think makes a good teacher?

**For parents:**

- Whose idea was it to find a tutor?
- What are your expectations/goals for your child?
- How much time per day/week can your child commit to homework?
- How long does your child spend in after-school activities?
- Can you help your child with homework?
- Do family members have any knowledge of this subject?
- Does your family attend any events related to this subject?

**The Value of a Learning Agreement**

"I have been stung a few times in the past so I now always give new pupils a pack when they start. The pack includes my CRB (though in the past no-one ever asked to see it), my business card with all contact details and my terms. If anyone cancels with less than 48 hours notice then I reserve the right to charge in full for the missed lesson. I am running a business and I don't see why I should have to lose out if someone is ill or forgets. That said, I do have some families that have been with me for years and been very fair with me. If they are ill then I would try to rearrange if at all possible. Since I have given out the pack I have had less cancellations."

***Sara Chatterton (chattertontuition.co.uk) on The Tutor Pages Linkedin discussion forum.***

Although some tutors don't use a learning agreement, they may be storing up potential problems and frustration further down the line. We recommend using one because it raises expectations all round. It demonstrates to the parent and/or student that you are a professional in your field, and that you're serious about the work you do. Conversely, it protects you by making it clear that you have your own requirements regarding fees, cancellations and other matters. Having said this, insisting on a learning agreement needs to be handled sensitively. You don't want to put anyone off by being too legalistic. If you make it clear that it clarifies your working relationship to the benefit of both the tutor and student, and that it's commonplace and you use it with all your students, you can approach the issue in a natural way.

The sample learning agreement on the following page would be useful for a tutor who is just starting out. Remember, though, that it is only a sample agreement, because potentially each tutor has different concerns they'd like to address and in different ways. This sample agreement includes the idea of a deposit payment, and a clause dealing with short-notice cancellations which are the main bugbear of inexperienced private tutors. It does not include the idea of a notice period or block payment of lessons (sometimes up to a term's lessons), which some tutors regard as essential.

# Private Tuition Learning Agreement

*(If the Student is under 18 years of age, this Agreement should be signed by a Parent or Guardian.)*

An Agreement made on ___ / ___ / ___ *(date)*
between _____ *(Tutor's full name)*
of _____ *(Tutor's address)*
and _____ *(full name of Student/Parent/Guardian)*
of _____ *(Student's address)*
for the Tutor to give lessons at the Times and Fees set out below.

**Times**

Day and time of lessons: _____
Location of lessons: _____
Date of the first lesson: _____

Duration of lessons: _____
Frequency of lessons: _____ (e.g. *weekly*)
Total no. of lessons: _____ (*if known)*

**Fees**

Lessons will be charged at the rate of £_____ per hour, payable weekly in cash or by cheque to the Tutor.

**Deposit**

After the first lesson, payment of one lesson in advance is required as a deposit.

**Cancellations**

**Any lessons cancelled by the Student (or the Student's Parent or Guardian) with less than 48 hours' notice will result in the Deposit being forfeited**, unless the Tutor decides otherwise because of exceptional circumstances. If the Tutor is obliged to cancel a lesson, the lesson will be rearranged for a time that is mutually convenient for both Student and Tutor.

**Termination of Lessons**

Lessons will continue until a mutually agreed termination date, at which point the Deposit will be returned. Both the Tutor and the Student (or the Student's Parent or Guardian) reserve the right to terminate lessons should they no longer be considered beneficial to the Student.

**Limitation of Liability**

While the Tutor will endeavour to ensure the Student makes satisfactory progress, this cannot be guaranteed, and the Tutor cannot be held accountable for the academic success or otherwise of the Student. To the maximum extent permitted by law, the Tutor accepts no liability for any direct or indirect loss or damage, foreseeable or otherwise, including any indirect, consequential, special or exemplary damages arising from the use of the Tutor's services or any errors or omissions in the content of the Tutor's learning materials.

**Signed by the Student/ Parent/ Guardian** *(delete as applicable)* _____ Date __ / __ / __
**Signed by the Tutor** _____ Date __ / __ / __

*(One copy to be retained by the Student/ Parent/ Guardian and one by the Tutor.)*

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# Private Tuition Booking Form

**Date of Booking:**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Name of Child:**

**Telephone no(s):**

**Subject:**

**Level:**
(is general help required, or is help needed in a specific area?)

**Exams:**
(is the student studying for a particular exam?)
(if the student is studying for a school entrance exam (11+, 13+), which school?)

**Exam Board:**
(this is important, because syllabuses vary from one board to another)

**Name of Current School:**
(day, or boarding school?)

**Location for Tutoring:**
(tutor's home, student's home, either, or another location)

**How long will you need lessons?**

**Miscellaneous information:**
(for example, SEN (Special Educational Needs), health, has the child missed school etc.)

**Possible Days/Times for Tuition:**

**Hourly Cost, and agreed Travelling Expenses:**

**Date of first lesson:**

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# 1.3 Staying Safe

There are various safety issues related to private tutoring. Here we cover the main areas.

**Health and Safety**

If you offer private lessons at your own home, you have a legal duty to make sure you're providing a safe environment. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requires that you do a simple **risk assessment** by looking for hazards in your workplace, and then consider the measures you're taking to control the risk of somebody being harmed. Common hazards include trailing wires, frayed carpets or a cluttered work space. See the HSE website for further details. **Public liability insurance** (see following page) will cover you in the unlikely event of an accident involving a member of public on your premises.

**Personal Safety**

Don't forget that potential students and parents are strangers, and so it is wise to be cautious. Before meeting for the first time, we advise you to:

- talk on the phone before meeting (ask pro-active questions, listen for any inconsistencies in information you are being told and stay alert for any odd behaviour);
- be vigilant, trust your instincts and don't be afraid to call off the meeting if you feel worried;
- meet in daylight, and in a public place if possible;
- tell a friend or family member where you are going, and when you expect to return;
- don't let anyone pick you up by car;
- take your mobile phone with you, and possibly a personal alarm;
- if you are visiting someone's home, ask if anyone else is going to be there and, if you're concerned, also ask about any pets;
- if someone is visiting your home, let them know that a friend or family member may also be there. If you're worried, you might also consider asking a neighbour to expect a call at a certain time after the lesson.
- whether you're working at a student's home or your own, make sure you have a clear exit from the room and the building.

Although it is sensible to remain vigilant, despite what the tabloids would have us believe, we should remember that personal safety is only very rarely a problem. For more comprehensive advice on personal safety, visit The Suzy Lamplugh Trust website at www.suzylamplugh.org.

**Child Protection**

Working in one-to-one situations with children means that you have a duty to look out for their well-being. Therefore, consider the following:

- **deal with any child protection issues.** If a student shares any information with you regarding abuse or bullying, or you suspect such problems, then you cannot ignore it. We would recommend you contact the NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk) for advice on what to do next.
- **have another person present.** This person can act as a witness in the extremely unlikely event of an accusation of abuse being made against you. If this is not possible, consider keeping the door open to where another person is present.
- **avoid physical contact with students.** In academic tutoring, touching a student (including gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder), is best avoided to prevent misinterpretation. On the other hand, many professional music teachers value touch highly, and have to make a judgement when to use it in the appropriate context.
- **avoid social relations with the student.** Except for the clear purpose of arranging lessons, phoning, texting, emailing or other social relations with a child should be avoided.

- **be careful about offering transport.** Only give a child a lift in your car with the clear permission of the parent/ guardian.
- **take a look at the NSPCC's website** (www.nspcc.org.uk) for advice on all areas of child protection.

**Professional Boundaries**

*Question: Which of the following roles are appropriate for a private tutor?*

*a) parent*
*b) friend*
*c) social worker*
*d) all of the above*
*e) none of the above?*

The best answer is… e) – this is because, as a professional, you need to be aware of and maintain appropriate boundaries. At the same time, there is also clearly a need for flexibility. **It is possible to be parental but not a parent, friendly but not a friend, and supportive but not a social worker**.

You might like to consider the following spectrum of tutor roles:

**A spectrum of tutor roles**

The key is to remain aware of the roles you can play, and to exercise caution so that you can build rapport with your students without landing yourself in trouble or being taken advantage of. If a serious issue is raised in a lesson, especially by a child, you should talk to the parent/ guardian, school or relevant authority. You should not try to resolve the problem on your own.

**Insurance**

If there's one topic in relation to private tuition that's lacking in clarity and structure, it's the question of **appropriate insurance for self-employed teachers**. Taking out insurance as a private tutor is not compulsory and many private teachers work uninsured. The reasons for this are varied: some are simply unaware of the risks, some consider the risks to be so small that it's not worth worrying about, and some consider the insurance premiums to be too expensive in relation to the amount they'll be earning. Our advice is that, whatever your situation, it is important that you at least understand the risks and consider the insurance options available to you.

First, make sure you understand the two types of insurance relevant to private tutoring. These are:

| Public Liability (PL) Insurance | Professional Indemnity (PI) Insurance |
|---|---|
| • *definition:* 'pays compensation to a member of the public and court costs in the event of the policyholder being successfully sued for causing death, injury or damage to property by failing to take reasonable care in his or her actions.'<br>• *example:* this would cover you if you were sued because a student had an accident at your home and suffered personal injury. | • *definition*: 'covers a professional person … against paying compensation in the event of being sued for negligence. This can include giving defective advice if the person professes to be an expert in a given field.'<br>• *example:* this would cover you if you were sued because a student failed to achieve their anticipated potential in examination grades. |

(definitions from Law and Smullen (2008) *Dictionary of Finance and Banking*. Oxford: University Press)

Second, check to see which of the following apply to you:

- **if you belong to an organisation, check to see if it provides you with insurance.** It is quite common for organisations to provide their members with PL insurance but not with PI Insurance. This is undoubtedly a recognition of how PI Insurance is not yet deemed essential in the UK for many professions. Organisations which provide PL alone to its members include the Musician's Union (MU), the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) and the Society for All Artists (SAA). It is often worth joining the appropriate organisation for your subject because trying to negotiate insurance for yourself as an individual is much more costly.
- **if you're going to teach at home, contact your household insurance provider.** In some cases, you may be able to arrange PL insurance cheaply as an extension to your household insurance.
- **if you're a qualified teacher, contact your teaching union.** Insurance is an area in which qualified teachers are currently at quite an advantage over non-qualified teachers. However, remember that membership of the major teaching unions does **not** automatically include insurance cover for teaching outside of your contracted hours. Instead, most unions have negotiated discount rates for insurance packages which combine both PL and PI. For example, four major UK Unions - the **ATL**, **ASCL**, **NUT** and **Voice** – have all secured a combined PL and PI insurance deal from only £50 a year. Details of the scheme can be found at http://www.alanboswell.com/business-insurance/teacher-insurance/. This deal represents such good value that it may be worthwhile joining one of these four unions for this reason alone.
- **if you're not a qualified teacher, consider your options.** Although the best deals are available through organisations such as those mentioned, tutors without teaching qualifications can still get properly insured. Understandably, for unqualified teachers the most costly insurance cover will be for PI, and therefore enquiring about PL only may be your best option. Getting the right deal for you will depend on your background and the kind of cover you require, and so it is in your best interests to talk first to a registered insurance broker. Contact either the Alan Boswell group through the above website, or search for other registered brokers at the British Insurance Brokers' Association homepage (www.biba.org.uk).

**Fraudulent Email Enquiries**

If you advertise as a tutor on the Internet, you need to watch out for the occasional fraudulent email enquiry.

These emails (see right) are usually variations of the so-called 'counterfeit cashier's cheque' scam.

Put simply, a dishonest enquirer from abroad asks if they can send you a cheque to pay for a block of lessons. For one reason or another, the enquirer then requests a refund for part or all of the amount. However, since the original cheque is fraudulent, you will lose any money you transfer back to the enquirer.

These emails tend to:

- be from a 'parent' overseas (typically Africa, Russia or Eastern Europe);
- request a large block of lessons upfront, despite knowing very little about you;
- have poor spelling and grammar;
- immediately request personal information such as your home address.

The best advice against such scams is simple: **never send money to someone you've only ever met on the Internet, no matter what the circumstances are.**

**Fraudulent Email: Example**

**The following is a real example of the most common type of fraudulent email.**

Often impersonal

Poor grammar

Subject : hi

Bizarre language

Dear,
Good day to you over there,i am Mr James klew I want a piano and Music Teacher for my daughter (Sonia klew), I got your advert while searching for piano and music lessons through the internet and I really want my daughter to be taught by you. Sonia is 18 year old and easily catch up. Although,I understand you are in England (UK) but I 've arranged with my cousin sister resides there in England (UK) that my daughter is coming to stay with her for her period of tutoring and she had agreed with me,I want you to get back to me with following details:

Lives abroad

1)what parts of England (UK) you are presently
2)total cost of tutoring for three months(one hours per day)
3)your years of teaching experience.

Looking forward to hearing from you soonest.
Thank you.
Mr James klew

Request for large number of lessons

**Online Identity Theft**

Online safety is an issue for everyone, and the UK government sponsored site www.getsafeonline.org gives up-to-date advice on all aspects.

However, one issue of particular relevance to tutors is **the risk of identity theft**. According to a recent report by Get Safe Online, **over 1 in 5 (21%)** of UK internet users have been the victim of online identity theft.

If you advertise your tutoring services on the internet, you need to take extra care that you're not increasing that risk by posting sensitive data online, for example, by including your CV.

According to the Metropolitan Police, criminals need only three out of 15 key pieces of information to commit identity fraud, with the average CV containing eight pieces of information.

**Not taking care of your CV can land you on the wrong side of the law**

"Caroline Coats, a company director from Montpellier, was in Birmingham doing some Christmas shopping when she was arrested after visiting her bank to get some money out. In less than an hour she was in a cell and questioned by police through the night. Why? Because she had been the unwitting victim of internet fraud after posting her CV on a jobs website."

This true story is continued at http://www.denisatlas.co.uk/TrueStories.asp

**All of the information below, commonly found in CVs, can help the identity fraudster:-**

- Full name
- Marital Status
- Place of Birth
- Driving Licence Status
- Number of dependents and ages
- Date of Birth
- Current Address
- Email address
- Phone numbers
- Employment History including referees and current employer
- Schools / educational establishments attended
- Personal information such as hobbies and interests

(source: www.denisatlas.co.uk)

At The Tutor Pages, we minimize the risk of identity theft both by collecting minimal data from tutors during sign up, and restricting the amount of personal data displayed online. For example, tutors do not enter their date of birth or home address, and only enter the first half of their postcode. In addition, we do not display tutor email addresses online, and ask that tutors do not include their phone number(s) in their online profile.

# 1.4 Keeping the Tax Man Happy

**(Please note The Tutor Pages Ltd is not a registered tax adviser, and cannot advise on your personal tax matters. Any information given is general and does not take into account your personal situation.)**

> **"The hardest thing to understand in the world is the income tax."**
>
> Albert Einstein

"Tax doesn't have to be taxing" – or so the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) slogan runs. Yet everybody's circumstances are different, and to a certain extent, your own tax affairs are as complicated as you want to them to be. That's how accountants and tax advisers earn their living, and why the HMRC website consists of a mind-boggling 130,000 unique pages of information.

If you think your tax situation is fairly straightforward, then you can take charge of it yourself – you don't have to employ an accountant. Arguably, unless you do take control, you don't really understand your own finances, and that's cause for concern.

**Reasonable Care**

Central to HMRC's recent guidelines is the idea that you should take 'reasonable care' to get your tax right. If you do this, they promise not to penalise you, even if you make a mistake. What's good is that the degree of 'reasonable care' necessary depends on your circumstances:

> **"We do not expect the same level of knowledge or expertise from a self-employed un-represented individual as we do from a large multinational company" (HMRC Compliance Handbook)**

Taking reasonable care includes:

- keeping accurate records of income and expenses;
- checking with HMRC or a professional adviser when you don't understand something;
- telling HMRC promptly about any error you discover in the information you've submitted.

> **"People do make mistakes. We do not expect perfection."**
>
> HMRC

Finally, from your perspective, taking reasonable care shouldn't just be about compliance: it also makes sure that you don't pay too much tax.

**Understanding How Self-Employed Tax Works**

If you do any kind of self-employed work as a tutor, you need to understand the government's system for collecting tax on self-employed earnings. Unlike any earnings you might have as an employee (through the so-called Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) system), you'll play an active role in calculating your tax, and the government trusts you to do that.

First of all, you need to register with HMRC as self-employed **within 3 months** of when you first start work, or risk paying a £100 fine. You need to register even if you're an employee as well, and also if you think you're only going to earn below the tax-free Personal Allowance (currently £7,475 for 2011-12).

You can register as self-employed by calling the Newly Self-employed Helpline on 0845 915 4515, or online through the HMRC website (www.hmrc.gov.uk).

**The Self-Assessment Tax Return**

Fewer than 1 in 3 UK taxpayers have to fill in a tax return. However, if you do any kind of self-employed work, it's obligatory.

Filling in the tax return can be done on paper or online. However, compared to the paper version, the online version is much more convenient: you have an extra three months to complete it, it tells you if you're making mistakes as you go along, and it also works out immediately how much tax you owe.

To register for online self-assessment visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa.

**What Do I Pay?**

Self-employed tax consists of:

- National Insurance Contributions and
- Income Tax.

Also, if your business turns over £73,000 or more a year you'll need to register for Value Added Tax (VAT) and fill in quarterly VAT returns. Since a turnover of more than £73,000 is unlikely as a private tutor, VAT is not covered in this guide.

**National Insurance Contributions**

Registering self-employed will automatically set the National Insurance Contributions (NICs) wheels in motion. NICs are relatively simple, and are explained below. Employees pay Class 1 NICs, but self-employed individuals pay Class 2 and Class 4 NICs. If you're both an employee and self-employed, you'll still make the NIC contributions outlined below. Depending on your own circumstances, however, there may be some tax savings you can make.

| **Class 2 NICs** | **Class 4 NICs** |
|---|---|
| As a self-employed individual, you'll have to pay Class 2 NICs at a weekly rate of £2.50 (2011-12 rate). These contributions count towards your State Pension, Incapacity Benefit, Bereavement Benefit and Maternity Allowance. HMRC will contact you to arrange a way for you to make these payments on a regular basis: the easiest way to pay them is quarterly by Direct Debit.<br><br>You usually have to pay Class 2 NICs even if you're an employee and just work self-employed in your spare time. However, if you earn (or anticipate earning) only a small amount through self-employed work (less than £5,315 for 2011-12), you can request form CF10 and apply to be exempt from Class 2 NICs. If you do so, however, check that you're not going to lose your entitlement to state benefits. | Being self-employed, you'll also become liable for Class 4 NICs. However, you'll pay these at the end of the tax year, at the same time as you pay your income tax. Class 4 NICs are worked out as a percentage of your taxable profits (9% on profits between £7,225 and £42,475 for 2011-12, plus 2% on any profit over that amount).<br><br>If you're of state pension age you don't have to pay Class 4 NICs. Also, if you are both employed and self-employed at the same time, and are earning above a certain amount (£42,475 for 2011-12), you could be over-paying your NICs. You can contact HMRC and ask to defer some of your Class 2 and/or Class 4 NICs until the correct amount can be calculated. Search for form CA72B on the HMRC website. |

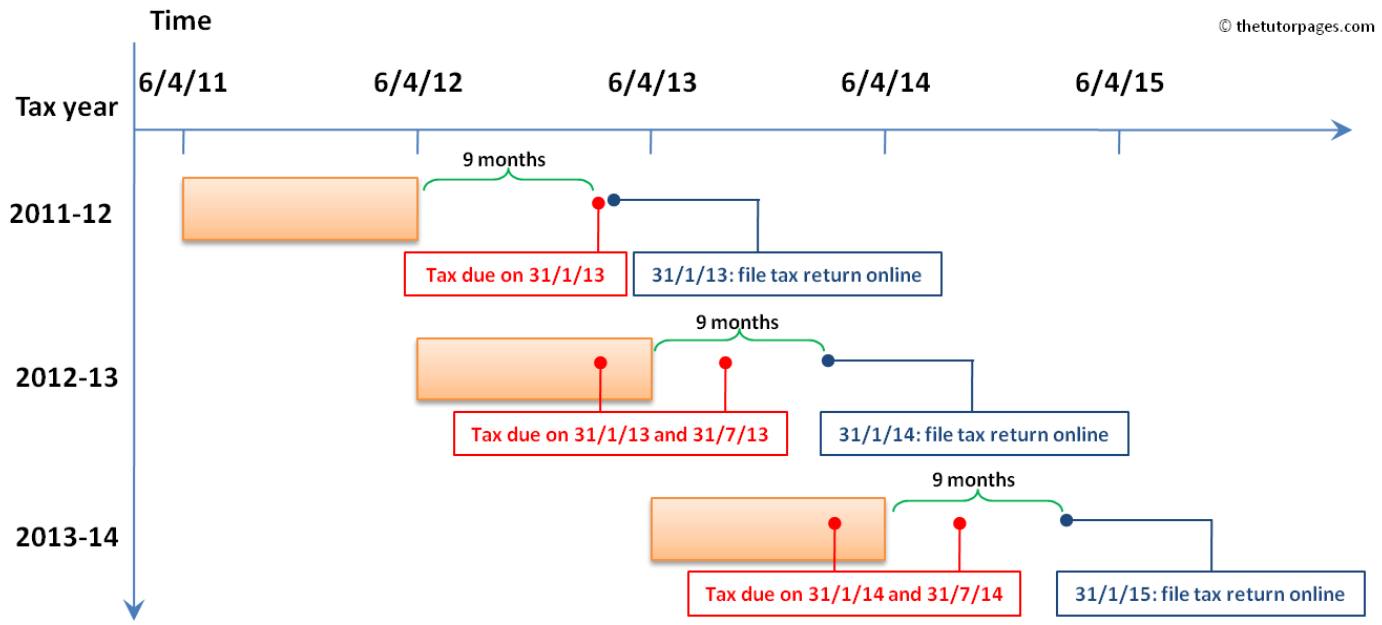
**Income Tax**

The diagram overleaf illustrates the most important points about the **self-employed income tax cycle**, namely:

- the **tax years** which run from 6 April to 5 April
- the deadlines for when your **income tax payments** are due
- the deadlines for when your **tax return** is due

The diagram assumes that you registered for self-employment at some point during 2011-12, that you decided to file your tax return online, and that you selected your accounting period to be the same as the tax year.

**The Self-Employed Income Tax Cycle**




The most important points to note about the income tax cycle are:

- If you file online, you have **up to 9 months** to file your tax return after the end of each tax year.
- After the end of your first tax year (not for subsequent years), HMRC gives you **a full 9 months** before you have to pay income tax.
- This may seem nice, but actually at this time you'll be hit with a **double** tax bill! That's because HMRC likes to take a biannual **payment on account** for subsequent years, and your first tax bill actually coincides with your first payment on account for the next year. You'll need to make sure you have the cash flow available to meet this payment at the appropriate time.
- Your payments on account are normally based on your tax bill for the previous year. This is fine if your income remains steady or increases year on year, but not if your income decreases. You can let HMRC know if you think your predicted income will be lower, and they will adjust your biannual tax bill accordingly.

**Income Tax Rates**

For 2011-12, for your earnings **above** the tax-free **Personal Allowance of £7, 475**, the income tax you'll pay is calculated on the basis of two rates:

| | |
|---|---|
| Basic rate: 20% | £0 - £35,000 |
| Higher rate: 40% | Over £35,000 |

The following 'ready reckoner' gives you an indication of how much money you might need to set aside to meet your eventual **combined income tax and NIC (Class 4) bill**. Remember, the exact amount can only be determined once your tax return has been completed.

| **estimated net profit (£ per month)** | 300 | 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800 | 900 | 1000 | 1100 | 1200 | 1300 | 2600 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **monthly amount to set aside for tax and Class 4 NIC (combined)** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 53 | 82 | 111 | 140 | 169 | 198 | 575 |

**Your Business Records**

In order to fill in your tax return, you'll need to set up and maintain appropriate business records. There are three steps to remember:

- set up a system
- keep your system up-to-date
- retain your records for six years

> **"A person with simple, straightforward tax affairs needs only a simple regime provided they follow it carefully."**
>
> HMRC

The kind of system you use is up to you, but in its most basic form, it'll need to record your **income** and **allowable expenses**. You can buy a cash book or create something on your computer that's tailor-made to your own needs. There are various types of commercial software available but they are often too complex and expensive for the needs of a private tutor.

Keeping records electronically is fine, but you'll need to print out paper copies too. We provide a sample monthly **Record Sheet** template for a private tutor overleaf.

**Private Tutor Income and Expenditure Record Sheet** **Month/Year:**

| INCOME | | | | ALLOWABLE BUSINESS EXPENSES | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Student Name | Income | | Date | Description | Travel expenses | Premises Costs | Phone/ Stationery | Other |
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| **TOTALS £** | | **£** | | | | **£** | **£** | **£** | **£** |

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**Recording Your Income**

If you're receiving only small payments for lessons, it is not necessary to provide the parent or student with a receipt, nor is it necessary to write invoices. The main point is to note down the payment you receive in your records. If you're receiving a lot of payments it may make sense to set up a separate bank account – though as far as HMRC is concerned, it's not obligatory. Finally, strictly speaking, the date on your Record Sheet records the day on which the work was completed, not the day the payment was received.

**Recording Your Allowable Expenses**

As a self-employed individual, you can claim certain allowable business expenses. This means that, when you complete your tax return at the end of the tax year, you can deduct these costs from your taxable profits, and so reduce your tax bill. Remember to keep all your receipts – for example, you could keep them in separate envelopes, one for each month of the year. You could then copy these amounts into your records once a month.

So, which business expenses are allowable? In the words of HMRC:

> **"The general principle is that all costs, which are actually incurred for the sole purpose of earning business profits, and excluding all personal elements, are allowable."**

Some allowable expenses are easy to record, such as when you buy a textbook for the sole purpose of tutoring. However, sometimes you'll need to work out what proportion of an expense was actually for business purposes, such as the use of a telephone. This is called *apportionment*.

Everyone's circumstances differ, and so the following is just a guide which will be relevant for most self-employed tutors.

On your tax return, the allowable expenses are divided up into different categories. If your annual turnover is below £30,000, you're allowed to just enter your business expenses as a single total value. However, during the year, it makes sense to record your expenses under different category headings (see the sample Record Sheet).

For tutoring, the most relevant categories are:

**Travel expenses**

Travelling to and from one fixed workplace does not count as an allowable expense. However, if you are an 'itinerant' tutor, you are allowed to claim for your travel expenses. Remember, though, that you'll have to work out or estimate what proportion of your travel expenses are solely for business purposes.

- For train and bus fares you can keep the tickets as receipts. For pre-pay Oyster cards, you can request a print-out if you need to work out the proportion of your journeys that were for business use. For season tickets, you'll have to estimate the proportion of journeys that were made for business use.
- For private vehicles, there are two options for working out your travel expenses. The complicated option is the **actual cost method** where you work out your costs exactly and apportion them for business use (search HMRC for guidance on this). The easy option, the **mileage rate method**, is where you simply note down how many business miles you've travelled, and claim a fixed rate per mile. If you use this method, you can't claim for any other motoring expenses at all, such as fuel, road tax, repairs, MOT etc. For the 20011-12 approved rates, see right. When you've chosen one of the two methods, you'll have to stick to it for the lifetime of that vehicle.

| 2011-12 | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Rate per mile for the first 10,000 miles | Rate per mile for any further miles |
| **Cars and vans** | 45p | 25p |
| **Motor Cycles** | 24p | 24p |
| **Bicycles** | 20p | 20p |

- Parking fees and meter charges incurred on business can also be claimed.

**Premises costs**

If you work from home, HMRC allows you to claim £3 per week as an acceptable estimate of your business expenses.

However, if you work at home for longer periods, it may be worth your while to work out more exactly the proportion of costs you can set against tax. In 2008, HMRC clarified the types of costs that can be claimed, referring to 'fixed costs' (such as council tax, mortgage interest, rent, home insurance) and 'running costs' (electricity, gas etc).

You need to base the amount you claim on how much of your property is used for business (area) and how long you work per week (time). There is not one single way to work out these allowable expenses, but HMRC has recently provided some useful examples on their website (see right).

**Working From Home: Example**

Chris is an author working from home. She uses her living room from 8am to 12am. During the evening, from 6pm until 10pm it is used by her family. The room used represents 10% of the area of the house.

The fixed costs including cleaning, insurance, Council Tax and mortgage interest, etc total £6600. A tenth of the fixed establishment costs is £660. For the purposes of fixed costs, one sixth (4/24) of the use by time is for business, so Chris claims £110.

She uses electricity for heating, lighting and to power her computer, which costs £1500 per annum. Chris considers an apportionment of these costs by time and area. A tenth of the costs are £150 and half of these costs by time (4/8) relate to business use, she claims £75.

HMRC *Business Income Manual* (BIM 47825)

***A Note on Capital Gains Tax***

Accountants have traditionally been wary of offsetting home running costs against tax because they feared homeowners would lose the normal capital gains tax (CGT) exemption granted to them when they sell their property.

However, the HMRC guidelines state that the circumstances under which you may lose exemption from CGT on your home are when "you've used any part of it for business purposes only" (see HMRC Help Sheet 283). In the case of a private tutor, this would be highly unlikely. As Mike Warburton, senior tax partner at Grant Thornton accountants, noted recently in *The Times*,

> When it comes to selling your home, you will lose your CGT exemption only on rooms that have been used exclusively for business purposes. In other words, if you use a room to carry out business five days a week and then let your children play in it for the other two, you would retain your CGT exemption on that room and not have to pay any tax when the property is sold (*The Times,* June 30, 2008).

In the final resort, HMRC is concerned that you work out your allowable expenses in a fair way. If you do so, the amounts that you claim are likely to be relatively small, and so the issue of CGT is unlikely to come up.

**Phone/ Stationery**

**Working From Home: Example (cont.)**

She also uses the telephone to connect to the internet for research purposes. Her itemised telephone bill shows that a third of the calls made are business calls. She can claim the cost of those calls plus a third of the standing charge.

HMRC *Business Income Manual* (BIM 47825)

Since 2007, HMRC have made it clear that you can claim not only for business telephone calls, but also for a proportion of broadband internet costs and telephone fixed line rental (see example, left).

As a private tutor, you should also claim for any stationery costs related to your business (paper, stamps, photocopying, printing, calculators, pens etc) as well as any textbooks, syllabuses and other educational materials that you need to buy.

**Other Expenses**

Other expenses you can claim include:

- **advertising and promotion costs** such as registering with thetutorpages.com, putting an ad in a newspaper or printing business cards and flyers;
- **insurance costs** such as public liability insurance and income protection insurance;
- **membership fees** to professional organisations directly related to your tutoring;
- **accountancy fees** should you hire an accountant, and other **professional fees**.

**And finally… Capital Allowances**

Capital allowances are allowances you can set against tax for the cost of certain **fixed assets**. Fixed assets are long-term assets such as **motor vehicles, computers, printers and furniture**. If you're a musician, a musical instrument is also a fixed asset.

You should keep receipts and a separate record of any purchases of fixed assets you make, because you'll enter your capital allowances in a different part of your tax return. As with other allowances, you need to make a fair estimate of the proportion of business and private use before claiming.

In 2008, HMRC greatly simplified the system for claiming capital allowances with their introduction of the **Annual Investment Allowance (AIA)**. In the past, all capital allowance claims had to be spread over several years. However, with the new AIA, you can claim the full amount on purchases of most assets (up to a total of £100,000 per year), excluding business cars.

In effect, as a tutor, this means that you can claim for any small fixed assets purchases (such as a computer) in the same way that you claim for any other allowable expense – but just in a different section of your tax return.

# Part 2: Effective Teaching

# Effective Teaching Defined

**Good Teaching Makes a Difference!**

In their acclaimed study of teacher effectiveness in UK schools, Hay McBer concluded that **effective teaching accounts for well over 30% of the variance in student progress**. Just think then, what effect high quality *one-to-one* teaching can have.

As a quick opening to this topic, here's a useful list of some of the attributes of an effective teacher:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| humorous | relaxed | imaginative | warm | firm | listens |
| fair | friendly | enthusiastic | organized | supportive | cheerful |
| flexible | encourages | sympathetic | responsive | enjoys the subject | makes work relevant |
| helps pupils learn | uses various methods | has high expectations | explains clearly | gives praise | applies sanctions fairly |

(adapted from Munn et al (1990))

**Professional Characteristics: The Heart of Teaching**

To go further and develop **powerful insights** and **practical advice** on effective teaching, Part 2 of this e-book takes the above mentioned Hay McBer report as a starting point.

In our introduction, we pointed out these authors' extraordinary revelation that factors such as age, experience and qualifications were bad predictors of teacher effectiveness.

Instead, Hay McBer placed great emphasis on **Professional Characteristics** as being at the heart of effective teaching.

They identified **16 overlapping professional characteristics** which contribute to effective teaching. These characteristics are, in their words, 'deep-seated patterns of behaviour', and outstanding teachers display these characteristics 'more often, in more circumstances and to a greater degree of intensity'.

> **"Everyone who remembers his own educational experience remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the kingpin of the educational situation."**
>
> Sidney Hook

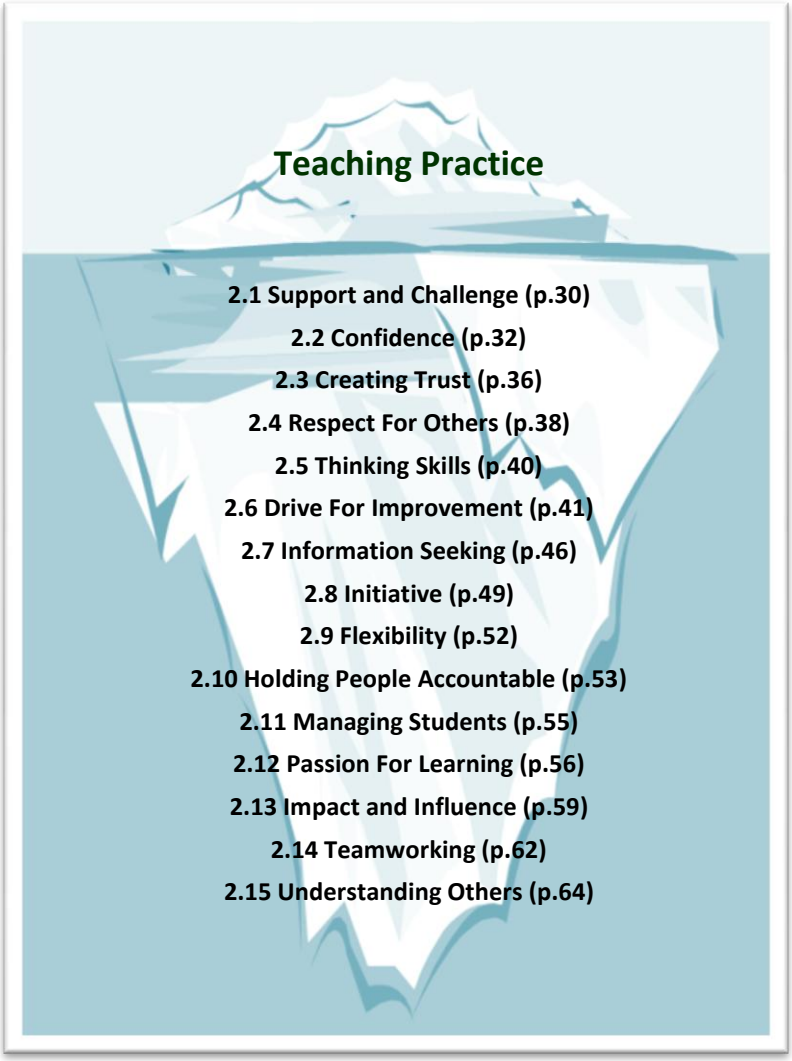
The skills, techniques and methods of good teaching practice are really just the tip of the iceberg (see overleaf). It is more important to focus on the **professional characteristics** which underlie good teaching practice, and the rest will follow naturally.

**How to Use Part 2 of this Guide**

The diagram on the right shows the remaining chapters of this e-book, which are based on the **professional characteristics** identified by Hay McBer. After an introduction to the characteristic concerned, each chapter then provides the advice, practical tips, templates, relevant research and further information which flow naturally from an investigation into that characteristic.

Also included is material which deals with areas highly relevant to tutoring. In particular, **student assessment** (including a **student record sheet** template) is covered in Chapter 2.6; information on the **National Curriculum and UK Exam Boards** is included in Chapter 2.7; **lesson planning** (including two templates) is included in Chapter 2.8; a feature on **motivation** can be found in Chapter 2.13; and a section on **learning styles** is included in Chapter 2.15.

Finally, the chapters need not necessarily be read in the order in which they appear, and you certainly don't need to absorb it all at once! We recommend that you print out this e-book and use it as a reference or source of inspiration as and when you need it.



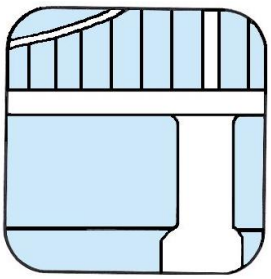

**'Teaching Practice is just the tip of the iceberg'**

**"Highly effective teachers recognize that effective behaviours – whether for managing time, handling stress, or dealing assertively with 'difficult' people – are not merely about the acquisition of external techniques. The techniques are just the end product; real and sustainable behaviour emanates from changes that are made internally, by reframing attitudes, challenging limiting beliefs and clarifying beliefs and values."**

Jacquie Turnball (2007) *9 Habits of Highly Effective Teachers*. London Continuum.

**"Good teaching is charged with positive emotions. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having the correct competences or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well-oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy."**

A Hargreaves (1998) 'The emotional practice of teaching'. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14 (8)



# 2.1 SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

**Q: Am I committed to doing everything possible to help my students be their best?**

Effective teachers not only care about their students but also take a firm line. This can be summed up in the important idea of **'tough caring'**.

**Supporting and caring**
about the student builds their self-esteem. Why is self-esteem important? Students with high self-esteem feel **optimistic**, **in control** and **capable** in their learning. They are more **receptive to criticism**, and more **resilient** against set-backs. They understand at a deep level that their value as a human being is not dependent on the knowledge or skills they have acquired.

**Challenging students**
is the reverse side of this coin, and is equally important. Good teachers **refuse to accept mediocrity** from the student, and give both **positive and critical feedback**. They'll criticize a student's behaviour, but not the student themselves. Choose your words carefully – as Duncan Grey says, 'don't belittle pupils. A moment's thoughtlessness on your part and they can remember it forever'.

## Tips for Supporting Students

- **Believe in your students.** Picture the success of your new student over the coming weeks, months and even years. If you assume that students are going to do well, it will influence the outcome. Your assumptions will manifest themselves both profoundly and imperceptibly.
- **Express your positive expectations consistently and repeatedly.** This is one of the most powerful ways to influence students and raise their achievement. Say to students, "You can do it!". Encourage struggling students: "It's hard learning something new, but I know you can do it". If it helps, you can tell stories of the successful struggles of other students.
- **Praise students appropriately.** Everybody, no matter what their success, needs encouragement. Sometimes in focussing so hard on improvement, we can forget to praise. Praise at least twice as much as you criticize. Praise can be public (to parents etc), private (during the lesson), and official (awarding of marks, or comments in a notebook). Compliment a student's good attitude, their ability to complete their homework and to work hard. Write words of encouragement in their notebooks. Make sure you praise effort as well as outcomes. Never let small successes go unnoticed: "Catch students doing something right."
- **Praise students in public** and it will magnify the effect. In particular, point out students' accomplishments in front of their parents.
- **Take pride in your students**. "I'm amazed at your progress, you've come on in such a short time." Make eye-contact when you give a sincere compliment.
- **Encourage students' self-pride.** ("Wow! Aren't you proud of yourself?" "Did you ever dream you could do that?"). This means they are not reliant on others for high self-esteem.

- **Treat each student as unique and special.** Use students' names: our names are important to all of us as human beings. Attribute special qualities to students ("Michael, you're such a quick learner, this won't be a problem for you." "Emma, you're such a good memorizer, I know you'll be able to achieve this in a week!"). You can act as if the student's ability is unusual – but of course don't overdo it.
- **Discourage negative self-talk**. "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're probably right". The internal dialogue students have with themselves matters. Encourage students to replace "I should have..." with "From now on, I will...". "Why" questions about one's performance are also usually unhelpful ("Why does this always go wrong?"). Far better questions begin with "How...?" ("How can I make sure I remember this?").
- **Encourage positive self-talk.** For example, before an important exam, suggest that students talk to themselves as if they were encouraging their best friend in a kind and supportive way. Remind them that nervousness and excitement are at root the same emotion.

**'A warm approach that signals care'**

According to Tony Swainston, pupils 'tend to respond most positively and learn most effectively when the teacher in front of them is a friendly, approachable figure. It is well-known now from research that an individual cannot learn when he or she is feeling threatened. When some form of threat is perceived, the brain will tend to revert to its primitive state of preparation for 'flight or fight', and learning becomes impossible'.

- **Use past achievements to point to the future.** When students feel they're not making progress, remind them of how far they've come and what they've already achieved.
- **Encourage optimism.** This in part means disentangling 'performance failure' from 'personal failure'. Make it clear that a failure in performance does not mean that the student is a failure as a person. The two are distinct. Instead, encourage students to be optimists. Martin Seligman has identified the key differences between optimists and pessimists. **Pessimists** tend to see the causes of failure as *internal* ("It's my fault"), *permanent* ("I'll never succeed at maths") and *pervasive* ("I'm just useless at everything"). On the other hand, **optimists** tend to see failure as *external* ("That maths exam was difficult"), *temporary* ("I was having a bad day") and *limited* ("It won't affect my French exam").
- **Foster a positive attitude towards life in general**. In the words of Bonnie Blanchard, 'I always kid my students and tell them that their lesson is the best hour of their week. At the end of a lesson that began with the weight of the world on their shoulders, I say, "See, aren't you happier now after you've had your lesson?"'.

## Tips for Challenging Students

- **Tell your students the truth.** In other words, don't praise mediocrity, and don't feel that everything has to be expressed with a positive spin. Students need to know where they stand. In the long run, it is honesty, not 'being nice', that will prove to them you care about them.

**'Come to the edge,' he said. They said, 'We are afraid.' 'Come to the edge,' he said. They came. He pushed them. And they flew.**

Apollinaire.

- **Challenge others** (most obviously yourself and parents) not to accept second-best. Even with high-achieving students, remember that no-one is ever their best.
- **Raise the bar**. "You memorized *x* amount this week, but by next week I'd like you to memorize *y*". "You've reached the right level for Year 7, but we can do better than that! I want you to achieve the level of someone in Year 8".
- **Frame challenges in a positive light**: "This is a tough exercise, but I know you can do it."
- **Turn around complaints**. "I wouldn't have set you this work unless I thought you could do it. Have faith in yourself." "I'm working really hard at teaching you this, and I expect you to work hard too. It's only fair, isn't it?". Remember the complaints (or write them down), and present students with them after they've succeeded – it'll help them see how they can defy their own expectations. Don't be afraid to make things a little uncomfortable. If performance has been unsatisfactory, pull the student up on it. Remind them that they can do better. "I'm not saying this because I think you're bad, but because I think you can do so much better."
- **Use humour**. Humour can be an effective way to communicate poor performance but in a supportive way. "I'm not sure that's *quite* what the examiner would be looking for!" "Let's just pretend this never happened!". Be careful that the tone is just right so that it's not taken in the wrong way. You can also use humour to reverse a

complaint: if a student says something like “This is too hard”, get them to say, “Wow, I think this is going to be fun for someone as good as I am!”.

*Bonnie Blanchard is a successful music educator in the United States. Here she presents her own ideas about support and challenge.*

**After Successful Performances, Let Students Bask in Their Glory**

‘How do you feel after such a moving performance?” “You played that piece so beautifully at the contest; you must be so proud of yourself.” “You should give yourself a pat on the back.” “You did so well in the recital. I’ll bet you can’t wait to start a new piece.” “Don’t you feel great about overcoming your problem with stage fright?” “The audience was spellbound by your playing.” “A year ago you could barely play a scale; today you played a concerto!”.

**After Disappointing Performances, Help Students Look to the Future**

One of the greatest gifts we can give our students is self-satisfaction and the ability to look beyond the problems of the day. Students who have developed a healthy sense of pride are much less apt to be crushed by a single performance. They are better able to see the big picture and to realize that one bad week, lesson, or contest does not define their abilities or worth as a person. Being a musician takes a healthy ego and resilience after ‘defeat’. Improving students’ ability to bounce back after disappointment is so vital …

Self-respect and self-confidence grow when you remind students of their strengths and successes. Some students habitually brush off compliments and launch into a list of things they could have done better, especially right after a performance. Remind them that after a performance, no matter how they felt they did, they must bow, smile, and graciously accept compliments. Encourage students to appreciate, and not discount, their accomplishments, even when the performance hasn’t matched their definition of ‘perfect’.

Don’t listen to moaning about the three missed notes in measure thirty that ruined the whole performance. “Let’s look at the whole performance in perspective. Sure, you messed up section G, but think back at how you might have played this piece six months ago. Though this particular day did not turn out the way you hoped, be proud of your improvement.” When teachers emphasize *mastery* over winning and losing, students see themselves as more successful. They know they’re improving, no matter the outcome of their performance.

Bonnie Blanchard (2007) *Making Music and Enriching Lives: A Guide for All Music Teachers*
Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

# 2.2 CONFIDENCE

**Q: Do I believe in my own ability to succeed, and do I rise to challenges?**

Effective teachers express **optimism** about their own abilities, and demonstrate confidence in most situations. The best teachers push beyond their limits, taking on new or difficult challenges willingly and positively. They develop **emotional resilience** in dealing with challenging students and situations.

Teacher confidence often stems from **experience** and an **up-to-date knowledge of the curriculum**. We address the latter source of confidence in Chapter 2.7 'Information Seeking' (p.46). Apart from these two, there are many other ways to shore up confidence too.

## Tips to Increase Self-Confidence

- **View yourself as a 'leading professional'**: believe in the value of your work, and identify with it.
- **Remember *why* you chose to become a teacher.** To re-energize yourself, remember the contribution you make to your students in terms of their knowledge, self-confidence, and self-development. Remember how a student's face lights up when they finally 'get' something.
- **Be aware of your own values.** As a teacher, you'll be dealing with children and/or adults from different backgrounds with different expectations about education, and different values to your own. You may wish to note down your own values regarding education, not least because it will help you answer questions from inquisitive parents or students about what you consider to be important.
- **Express your professional opinion**. Get used to expressing yourself objectively and independently, even if your views may come into conflict with others'.

**Two prized teacher assets: *resilience* and *commitment***

According to Christopher Day et al., there are two prized assets of professional teachers: **resilience** and **commitment**. Resilience is the ability to 'bounce back', to recover strength or spirit quickly in the face of adversity, and a sign of commitment is when you don't always put your own interests first.

These assets are crucial for teacher effectiveness, and can be sustained by certain beliefs. Firstly, a deeply held belief that **teaching is a vocation** to which you are committed, regardless of external setbacks. Secondly, a belief in your **self-efficacy** – your ability to handle most situations confidently, knowing that you will make a difference.

- **Understand the psychology of confidence**. According to the psychologist Paul Dobranksy, anxiety is neither good nor bad: it's just a signal telling you to do something. If you're anxious, you have only 3 options. Firstly, you can be **impulsive** and avoid thinking about the problem. This amounts to being passive. Secondly, you can **think like a victim**, which includes thoughts of 'poor me', worry, complaint and helplessness. Or thirdly, you can **take courage.** Dobransky defines courage simply as **a decision to 'do the right thing'**. If courage is a decision then, being alive, we are by definition capable of making decisions and being courageous. According to Dobransky, the interesting thing is that when you 'do courage', you are guaranteed to reap an equal amount of **confidence** in proportion to the amount of courage you put in.

- **Have ready responses for difficult situations.** Preparing for difficult situations is one way to make sure your confidence won't take a knock. For example, what will be your response to lateness, to bad language, or to a late payment? Consider also the occasional difficult question a student might throw at you, for example, "Have you heard of ... (a pop group you've never heard of)?", "Have you got a boyfriend/girlfriend?", "How old are you?". Set boundaries about disclosing personal information. Answering with a joke is a good way to deflect the question, as is offering to answer the question in the student's own time after the lesson (which can lead to loss of interest).
- **Adopt a problem-solving, future-focussed and objective approach** when something occurs that leaves you feeling deflated, unsure or angry.
- **Don't exhaust yourself**: set boundaries so that you know what you should and shouldn't take on.

There are various exercises you can do to stimulate greater confidence in your teaching abilities. Here are two such exercises which have been designed by and for teachers:

**Reflection: What's Your Worth?**

Jackie Turnbull calls the following task **'the hardest exercise I ever ask delegates in training to complete'**. She continues, 'it needs a degree of coaxing and encouraging to get delegates to provide a response to every question. Initially there'll be some embarrassed squirming, and quite a lot of 'I can't think of anything.' In contrast, there can also on occasion be an overconfident, even boastful, response that suggests an unhealthy level of self-regard.

'Your degree of self-esteem is directly linked to your ability to act assertively. Low self-esteem will lead to feeling threatened by people and situations, which results in unassertive behaviours. Boastfulness also can be a mask for insecurity and low self-esteem which results in aggressive behaviour. Being able to think realistically about your worth as a person need involve neither false modesty nor boastfulness. Rather it will be a test of your belief in yourself as a competent, well-adjusted professional.

'So, write a response to each question:

- What skills are you proud to have developed?
- What is the hardest thing you have accomplished in your life?
- What do you particularly like about yourself?
- What professional ability can you recognize you've developed?
- What are you very good at?
- Which attribute have you developed that you feel good about?
- What benefit are you able to bring to working with other people?

Having written down the answers, say them out loud to yourself. Make a complete sentence that you can say in a calm and confident manner, for example: 'I am proud that I have developed...''.

Jacquie Turnbull (2007) *9 Habits of Highly Effective Teachers*. London: Continuum.

**Replacing Limiting Beliefs with Positive Beliefs**

Tony Swainston writes that:

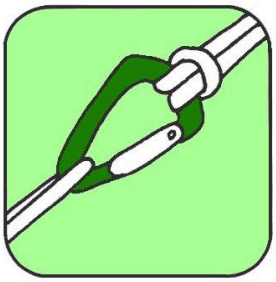
'It is very easy to be drawn into a belief system that says that you cannot improve, pupils are difficult, everything is stacked against you and you are the innocent victim. An alternative is to look for the possibilities which exist, and strive for improvement and success. I believe that this is what all effective teachers do. ...

'It is not a bad idea to spend a moment now thinking of five key beliefs about teaching and pupils that may at times have limited your progress, and then to think of another five statements about your personal beliefs which can serve to improve your performance and enjoyment of teaching. I believe it is important for you to derive your own examples here. I have included one limiting belief and one positive belief simply as examples. If these are relevant to you then just keep them; if not, then please ignore them.

| Limiting Beliefs | Positive Beliefs |
|---|---|
| **1.** I'm not good at communicating my high expectations. | **1.** I have very high expectations, and make sure I express these to students in a supportive way. |
| **2.** | **2.** |
| **3.** | **3.** |
| **4.** | **4.** |
| **5.** | **5.** |

'What it is important to realize is that your limiting beliefs do not have to remain part of you. You may have believed these things at one time and you may believe them now, but you do not have to continue to see things this way.'

Tony Swainston (2008) *Effective Teachers in Secondary Schools* London: Network Continuum.
[Limiting/Positive Beliefs examples have been changed]



# 2.3 CREATING TRUST

**Q: Am I consistent and fair, and do I keep my word?**

Demonstrating **professional dependability** has a powerful impact: you will win the respect and trust of parents and students, and earn their confidence. You will also become a good role model for students.

If you are sincere and genuine, you'll create **an atmosphere of trust**, and be able to **build rapport**. When students feel able to trust you, they'll behave more naturally, express themselves more honestly and be more likely to ask for help. They'll become more open to your expectations, and will also be able to take on board your criticism because they'll understand that you have their best interests at heart. Crucially, they'll try things beyond their comfort zone because they won't be afraid of the consequences of making mistakes.

## Tips to Strengthen Trust

- **Follow through on the promises you make.** Show students they can count on you. Keep your word. Avoid giving 'mixed messages' – don't say one thing and do another.
- **Don't promise results which won't happen –** especially in your promotional material. Remain truthful to yourself and to your students about their potential: make sure your goals for them are realistic.
- **Give rewards and sanctions consistently and fairly.**
- **Consider drawing up a learning agreement for students (see p.13).** Done in the right way, a written agreement will help reassure parents and students of your professionalism.
- **Don't talk to students negatively about other students** ("Sometimes I think John's progress is so slow! But you're coming on much better"). They'll quickly see that they might be the target of a similar attack.
- **Act according to your own values**, even if there is a personal cost to doing so.
- **Avoid embarrassing students.** Don't make students feel small or inadequate ("I don't know why you're so nervous about this exam ... You shouldn't be at your age"). Don't be condescending, or put yourself on a pedestal.
- **Include information about yourself in conversations with students.** A certain amount of 'self-disclosure' to students makes you more approachable. One of the advantages of home tutoring is that by presenting your natural environment, students will more easily see you as a 'real person' and begin to trust you.
- **Delve deeper.** If a student seems upset or distracted, don't just carry on regardless. Interrupt the lesson to find out more in a sensitive way.
- **Be ethical.** Don't 'poach' other teachers' students, don't write students' essays for them, and don't break copyright laws with your photocopying.
- **Admit when you're wrong.** Apologize quickly and professionally, and take the blame. You won't win trust or respect if you try to prove that you were right all along.

**Establishing trust: the early stages**

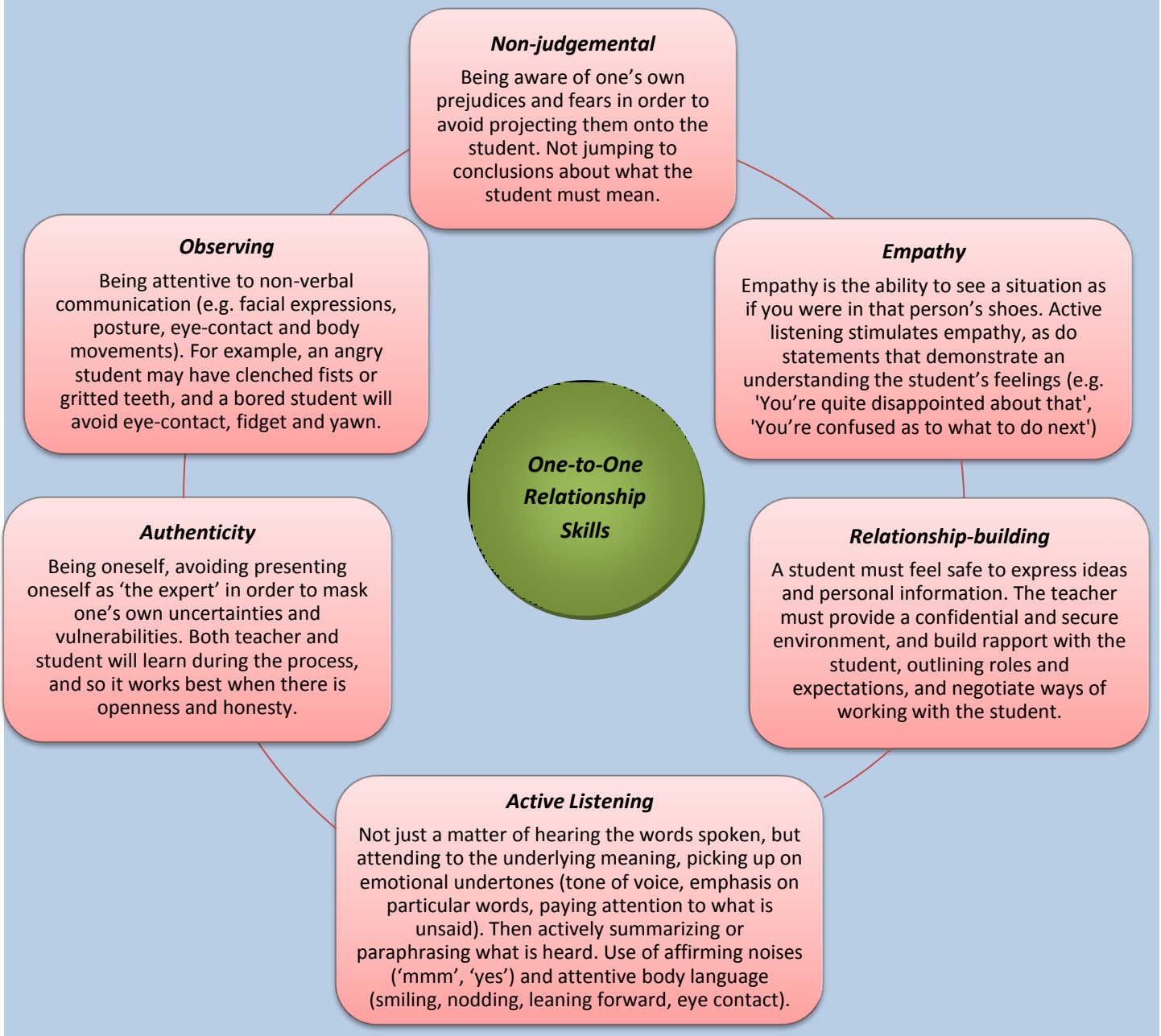
Getting to know a student for the first time is an important time to establish rapport. Asking the right kind of initial questions will help you do this, and Duncan Grey's **'Questions for a Pupil-to-Teacher Interview' are** as good a starting point as any.

- How are you getting on in [subject]?
- What's your favourite subject? Why?
- What's your least favourite subject? Why?
- What would you like to do when you leave school?
- What subjects/grades do you think you need for that?
- What's your favourite way of learning? (reading, listening, doing, sharing with others, working alone/in groups etc)
- What would you say are your best skills/qualities?
- If you were in my shoes, what would you change?
- How could we, together, make things better for you at school?
- If you were head teacher what would you do?
- What makes you happiest/ unhappiest about a school day?
- What is the biggest problem in the way of you being really successful at school? Can we get rid of it or get round it? How?

- **Pay attention to your body language.** The key to good nonverbal communication is *congruence*. That is, groups of movements and gestures need to have roughly the same meaning, and match the meaning of the words that accompany them. For example, imagine you're a parent meeting a tutor for the first time. She may be standing at an appropriate distance, shaking your hand with a warm, firm grip, and smiling. However, she refuses to meet your eyes. This would be an example of *incongruence*, and may suggest to you that she is anxious or has something to hide. Instead, open and relaxed body language speaks volumes about the kind of atmosphere you're trying to create. For example, an open smile communicates at once that 'I am confident', 'I'm happy to be with you', and 'I expect you to be happy too'.

## One-to-One Relationship Skills

Gina Wisker et al have identified the most important skills for building a trusting relationship between a university personal tutor and his/her student. Needless to say, these principles can be applied to many other one-to-one teaching situations. Here's a summary of the requisite skills:




Wisker et al *(2008) Working One-to-One with Students*

# 2.4 RESPECT FOR OTHERS

**Q: Do I show respect and consideration for others?**

By demonstrating that you **respect** and **value** your students, it helps them to shape their self-image. It helps them to recognise their unique talents, to feel special and to have the confidence to succeed.

Unless you show respect to your students, they won't show respect to you in return. The best way to teach students how to show respect is by being respectful yourself.

For real learning to take place, empathy and exchange are necessary. This involves **listening to students** and **valuing their contribution**.

## Tips for Showing Respect

> **"What wisdom can you find that is greater than kindness?"**
>
> Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

- **Always act in your students' best interests.** You may like to consider having a 'mission statement' for your teaching, such as: "I always consider the welfare of my students first". Practically speaking, this may mean that, for example: you admit to yourself that a particular student might be better served by a different teacher; you don't push a student to enter an exam when you know they're not ready; or you (temporarily) put aside your ambitions for a student when they're burdened by other pressures.
- **Actively listen to students and parents.** Don't interrupt. Rather, acknowledge and show interest in what they have to say. Give genuine value to their opinions. Listen to students' problems and anxieties and respond to them rather than minimizing them. If a student is struggling to express themselves, be careful not to cut them off and second-guess their meaning.
- **Be careful with your words.** Be courteous and polite, taking care to use helpful and not hurtful language. Rather than saying "I'm disappointed", say, "Do you think this was your best effort?". Rather than pointing out that a mistake was "stupid", say, "Let me show you how I might have tackled this". When you're angry, try to demonstrate to students that they are still valued even if they have behaved in a way which is unacceptable.
- **Model respect in your own behaviour**. Start and finish lessons on time; don't cancel at the last minute without good reason; return calls; be well-organized and tidy; dress professionally; take your work seriously.
- **Change your attitude towards mistakes.** In a supportive learning environment, mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process (see right). Laugh at your own mistakes too: be human.

> 'Making mistakes in a new language can be embarrassing, but as a language teacher and student, I have found that it is better to make a mistake than to say nothing at all. In foreign language teaching, we like to hear students make mistakes, because we see it as a sign of learning. We usually make mistakes when we are trying something new, and it is only through this experimentation that we will learn!'
>
> *Thea Jaffe (English language teacher)*

**Respecting the Lives of Adult Learners**

Respecting and understanding adult learners is just as important as it is with children. If you are a lifelong learner, or someone who has been involved in education for some time, it can be difficult to appreciate the kind of challenges which some adult learners face in learning something new.

Adult learners can lack confidence just as much as children, and may fear being humiliated about what they don't know. Amanda Hayes, an expert on adult education, notes that '[adult] learners who have had negative school experiences are likely to have their earlier feelings of inadequacy and failure reinforced'. They may be afraid not only of failure, but of success too. They can be anxious that 'gaining a qualification and starting a new career will alter their status and separate them from their friends and family in an elitist way'.

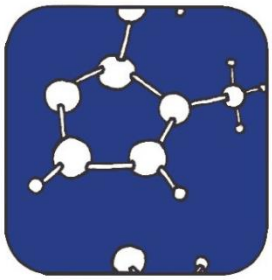
**An environment of equal status**

Hayes recommends **developing an environment of equal status**, where adult students are treated as adults: 'Whenever possible, we should involve our students in decisions about the course, usually referred to as "negotiating the curriculum". We need to be clear about which aspects are negotiable and which are not and the consequences of any particular choice, in order to avoid any false expectations and discontent in the future'.

Adults are under all sorts of practical pressures when studying, mainly from family (caring for a sick relation, taking children to the dentist, domestic tasks) and from work (overtime, change in shift pattern, promotion, seasonal demand, maternity/sick cover). The excuse 'I didn't have time' can mask all sorts of deeper issues, such as a lack of practical and emotional support from others.

To work with adults effectively, and indeed to retain them as students, you may need to talk it through with them how best to elicit the right support from family and friends. In the end, you'll have to find a balance between being sympathetic to the very real problems that adult students face, and demanding the right level of commitment from them to achieve worthwhile learning outcomes.

For advice on **techniques for teaching adult learners**, see Chapter 2.15 'Understanding Others' p 64.



# 2.5 Thinking Skills

**Q: Do I analyse situations and evidence in a logical and systematic way? Do I recognize patterns, use learning theories, and create my own ways of explaining something?**

## Analytical Thinking

**Analytical thinking** is essential to a teacher's work. For effective teaching, it is crucial to notice whether something in a lesson is going well in real time. It is also necessary to **reflect** on why some things went better than others, and to **make improvements** for next time.

By demonstrating analytical thinking, effective teachers also show students the importance of a **logical approach**, and help them to question why they are doing what they're doing.

## Tips

- **Break down tasks or problems into key parts.** Split learning into easily digestible parts which have a logical flow.
- **Specify objectives and learning outcomes**, and set them out clearly. Students can then measure their achievements against them.
- **Assess in order to plan.** Plan individual lessons, units and programmes of work based on evidence-led assessment of pupils, and evaluation of results.
- **Analyse the reasons for student behaviour or performance.** Be open to several possible causes, and several possible solutions.
- **Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving in lessons.** Evidence must be collected, analyzed logically, evaluated and interpreted.
- **Use good questioning techniques.** See Chapter 2.6 'Drive for Improvement' for a special feature on this.

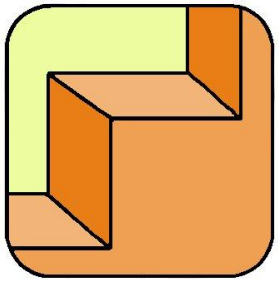
## Conceptual Thinking

Effective teachers are interested in **finding patterns and links**. They use and adapt concepts, ideas and theories which already exist, but also invent their own ways of explaining something complex in simpler terms. Moreover, they are always on the look-out for connections across areas of the curriculum, between subjects and with 'real life'.

> **"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."**
>
> Albert Einstein.

## Tips

- **Value and use different learning theories** as part of your approach to teaching.
- **Make the complex simple:** think of ways to communicate difficult concepts in simple terms, using analogies, diagrams or demonstrations.
- **Encourage creative thinking.** Edward de Bono, the man who coined the term 'lateral thinking', has extensive information on this topic on his website at www.edwdebono.com/debono/lateral.htm.



# 2.6 DRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

**Q: Do I continuously set and meet ambitious targets for myself and my students?**

Not only do effective teachers **set ambitious targets** for their students, they **constantly track and measure** their students' performance against these objectives. The targets must relate to the student's past performance, and must be tailor-made to the student's own level and capabilities.

Targets must be both **stretching** and **achievable**. For a student to achieve more than he or she (or anyone else) thought possible is crucial in building up their self-esteem. It sets up a virtuous circle: the more they achieve, the more they want to learn. Measuring progress and results against standards (whatever these may be) is in itself a **motivator** for students.

In general, having high standards lead to a lower drop-out rate. This is because students and parents will respect you and your work ethic, and the fact that you are passing it on.

Independent tutors don't have the benefit of performance reviews, so you have to be your own critic. **Hold yourself accountable** and look carefully at your effectiveness. The best teachers are interested in improving their own skills and characteristics, and so are committed to their own continuing professional development. This commitment reminds them of what it is like to be a learner, helps them to empathize with their students, and makes them a role-model for lifelong learning.

Two **educational gurus** on the importance of **tailor-made targets:**

**"The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly."**

David Ausubel

**"If you can't solve a problem, then there is an easier problem you can solve: find it."**

George Polya

## Tips on Target Setting

Goals energize us, guide our lives, and give us focus and a sense of achievement and fulfilment.

- **Get clear on your own goals for each student.** Be specific. Ask, "What skills and knowledge do I want this student to have mastered in a month's time, in three months' time, or in six months' time?". You can write down short-term (weekly), medium-term (monthly) and long-term goals for your students as part of **lesson planning** (see Chapter 2.8 'Initiative' (p.49) for an explanation of lesson planning).
- **Communicate your goals to the student.** In order that they can improve their performance, students need to know what skills, knowledge or understanding they are expected to learn. Make sure you fill students in on the 'big picture' – not just *what* they are required to learn, by *why* they need to do it.
- **Create opportunities for students to feel successful as soon as possible.** Break up goals into achievable parts. After students have experienced success, gradually increase the difficulty level. Even while working towards one goal, students can contemplate the next one, and the next one.
- **Be aware of different types of goals**. *Outcome goals* – passing the test, getting the right grade, winning the competition, entering the right university – are important, but there is the risk of failure and subsequent disappointment due to circumstances beyond our control. Ideally speaking, outcome goals should be seen as by-products of *proficiency goals*, which emphasize competence or mastery over specific results.

- **Set high standards right from the start.** Expect a lot, even from beginners. Don't let things slide. You'll be instilling good habits which will make the process easier as time goes by.
- **Help students visualize very long term goals.** What would they like to be doing in a year, 2 years' or 5 years' time?
- **Help students write their own action plan.** Owning the goal-setting process can be very motivating for students, and writing down and constantly reviewing these goals is the most powerful way to achieve them. You can help students break long-term goals into smaller goals, with target dates for each one. Small goals help students feel a sense of forward motion and achievement as they go along. You may need to help prioritize a list of competing goals.

**Questions to ask students about their goals.**

- Is your goal challenging but reachable?
- Have you set it high enough?
- Is it specific, and phrased positively?
- Is the goal *really* what you want (be careful what you wish for)?
- Do you 'own' the goal, or is it rather your parents'/ teacher's (your motivation will suffer if it is)?
- Does your goal contradict other goals you may have?
- What will you have to give up in order to achieve this goal?
- What are the obstacles to your goal?

- **Look to yourself first if a student is underachieving.** Ask yourself, "Did I *really* teach the student something today?". Expect a lot from yourself: teach the best lesson you can.
- **Help students identify limiting beliefs.** The beliefs we hold about ourselves affect our level of achievement. Sometimes these are conversations we have with ourselves that are not entirely conscious. You can help students to identify the limiting beliefs which are holding them back, such as "I'm no good at maths" or "I'm not confident in writing". What effect have such beliefs had on them in the past, how are they affecting them at present, and how will they affect them in the future? If you have a good relationship with the student, you can explore these questions compassionately, and they should reach a point where they want to reject these beliefs. Then you can then help them formulate a set of positive beliefs, such as "I can achieve anything if I put my mind to it" or "If I've done my best and learnt something, then I'm successful". See Chapter 2.2 'Confidence' for a practical exercise in this.
- **Recognize that achievement levels will inevitably vary.** No matter how high your standards, students will have different capabilities, varying motivation, learning styles, time commitments and parental support.
- **Commit to your own self-improvement and lifelong learning.** Consider the training opportunities available through joining a union or subject-related organisation.

## What is Assessment?

There are two types of assessment available to teachers:

**formative assessment *(assessment FOR learning)***

- This kind of asssessment has become a lynchpin of modern teaching practice. It is where learning is continuously assessed and fed back into the learning process in order to modify and enhance it.
- It generally involves good questioning and feedback skills on the part of the teacher. It also involves encouraging students' self-assessment: helping them judge the success of their own work, and set their own targets for improvement.

**summative assessment *(assessment OF learning)***

- This is the traditional use of exams, tests, quizzes or marking of written work after a period of learning.
- It assigns the student a grade or score, and summarizes their achievements so far.

## Tips on Formative Assessment

**Effective formative assessment relies on good questioning skills.** Carole Sullivan in her booklet *Questions Worth Asking*, explains:

> Questioning is the key means by which teachers find out what pupils already know, identify gaps in knowledge and understanding and scaffold the development of their understanding to enable them to close the gap between what they currently know and the learning goals.

Dr. Benjamin Bloom famously developed a taxonomy for learning on all levels, from the concrete to the abstract. Sullivan explains its structure:

> Bloom suggests that pupils need to have **knowledge** before they can understand it and that they need to **understand** it before they can **apply** it in different contexts. They need to be able to handle these "lower order" skills (knowledge, comprehension, application) before they can **analyse** and **criticise**. This is necessary before they can combine different kinds of knowledge to create new understandings (**synthesis**), after which they can then move on to **evaluate**, the 'highest' order. Moving between these stages demands increasingly complex thinking by the learner.
>
> There may well be exceptions to this, but Bloom is helpful when scaffolding questions. If pupils cannot answer questions of a specific type, the teacher can lower the order to take them back to what they can do, then build it up again.

She then goes on to list Bloom's **six headings**, **'what students need to do'** and to give **useful examples** to help teachers formulate appropriate questions to students:

### Knowledge

**define, recall, describe, label, identify, match, name, state**

*What is it called?*
*Where does ... come from?*
*When did it happen? Who?*
*What types of triangles are there?*

### Comprehension

**translate, predict, explain, summarize, describe, compare (events and objects), classify**

*Why does he ... ?*
*Explain what is happening in the crater ...*
*So how is Tim feeling at this point?*
*What are the key features?*

### Application

**demonstrate how, solve, try it in a new context, use, interpret, relate, apply ideas**

*What do you think will happen next? Why?*
*So which tool would be best for this?*
*Put the information into a graph.*
*Can you use what you now know to solve this problem?*

### Analysis

**analyse, explain, infer, break down, prioritize, reason logically, reason critically, draw conclusions**

*What patterns can you see in the way these verbs change?*
*Why did the Germans invade?*
*What assumptions are being made ..?*
*What is the function of ... ?*

### Synthesis

**design, create, compose, combine, reorganize, reflect, predict, speculate, hypothesize, summarize**

*Compose a phrase of your own using a syncopated rhythm.*
*What is the writer's main point?*
*What ways could you test that theory?*
*What conclusions can you draw?*

### Evaluation

**assess, judge, compare/ contrast, evaluate**

*Which slogan is likely to have the greatest impact?*
*Should they develop the green-field or the brown-field site?*
*Which was the better strategy to use?*

## Tips on Summative Assessment

Effective summative assessment by private tutors can consist of:

- **using tests or quizzes during the lesson**
- **setting regular homework which will be marked and/or graded**
- **the use of student record sheets**
- **producing periodic reports for students/ parents**

A sample **student record sheet** is included on the following page. In effect, it is simply a place for you to record what went on during the lesson, and what was set for homework. The *comments* section could be used to record how you felt the lesson went, and things to remember for next time. Enough space is included for a month's lessons, assuming the student attends weekly.

These record sheets can then be used to create **periodic reports for students and parents** to give them an idea of progress. Philip White, a tutor with many years' experience, explains his reasoning behind producing periodic reports:

> "The parents of your pupils will be reassured that you are not just interested in your lesson fee, but are committed to carefully monitoring the progress of your pupils … I would advise progress reports every half-term for those pupils who are having weekly tutorials. The more specific you make the contents of your progress reports, the better. Parents like grades. They like easy ways of quantifying performance and progress. The best way of achieving this is to set a weekly homework assignment. If you insist that the assignment is handed in for marking, you will be able to build up a series of grades (which form a good basis for making assessments)."
>
> http://www.aplustutors.co.uk/tutors/profitable_tutoring-06.php

**Student Record Sheet** **Student Name:**

| Lesson no. | Date | Topics Covered | Homework Set | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

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# 2.7 INFORMATION SEEKING

**Q: Do I seek out information from a range of sources?**

**Intellectual curiosity** and **a drive to get to the heart of things** are inherent in good teaching practice.

> **"The important thing is not to stop questioning."**
>
> Albert Einstein.

Firstly, effective teachers constantly **gather information about their students**, their background, who they are, and their learning, progress and attainment. Finding out what interests and motivates students means that you can adapt your approach so that it continues to be well-paced and relevant to them. Doing so also increases student self-esteem, because they feel recognized and valued as individuals.

Secondly, effective teachers seek out new information about their **subject and curriculum**, **best practice**, and about **new developments** and **research**. This enhances teaching and learning, and keeps it fresh.

## Tips on Information Seeking

- **Get clear on the requirements for your subject.** If you teach an academic subject, make sure you understand the national curriculum, examination board requirements and local school entrance requirements (see box on following page).
- **Regularly ask questions of and about your students** to build up a picture of them as individuals.
- **Be on the look-out for new ideas** to stay sharp and creative. If you're bored with the way you teach, your students won't stand much of a chance either.
- **Systematically gather and store a range of information** on subject and curriculum content, best practice and research.
- **Join organisations** related to your subject, and subscribe to relevant magazines.
- **Attend conferences and workshops** on your subject.
- **Use the internet** to find more resources.

> **"Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it."**
>
> Samuel Johnson.

## Our Top 20 Educational Websites

http://curriculum.qca.org.uk - This is the home of the UK **National Curriculum**.

www.bbc.co.uk/languages - The **BBC Languages website** is one of the best sites for an introduction to language studies.

www.bbc.co.uk/learning - The **BBC Learning website** provides resources for teachers, students and parents.

http://teachers.guardian.co.uk/ - The **Guardian Teacher Network** has thousands of free resources for teachers.

www.educationforum.co.uk/ATW/members.htm - This is the home of the **ATW** (Association of Teacher Websites).

www.coursework.info - **Coursework.info** is the UK's largest academic coursework library covering all subjects.

www.englishbiz.co.uk - **Englishbiz** is one of the best websites available for help with English at the secondary level.

www.heas.org.uk - The **Home Education Advisory Service** provides parents with advice and support on home schooling.

www.homeworkelephant.co.uk - **Homework Elephant** has over 5000 resources for all subject areas.

**Our Top 20 Educational Websites (cont.)**

www.ilovelanguages.com - **iLoveLanguages** has links to over 2000 carefully reviewed language websites.

www.learningdisabilities.org.uk - This is the home of the **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities**.

www.maths.com - **Maths.com** is a site rich in content, covering all maths-related topics.

www.mathsisfun.com - **Maths is Fun** is a well laid out website with lots of free maths activities.

www.nagcbritain.org.uk - The **National Association for Gifted Children** deals with all aspects of giftedness.

www.schoolzone.co.uk - **Schoolzone**, an educational search engine, has over 60,000 resources reviewed by teachers.

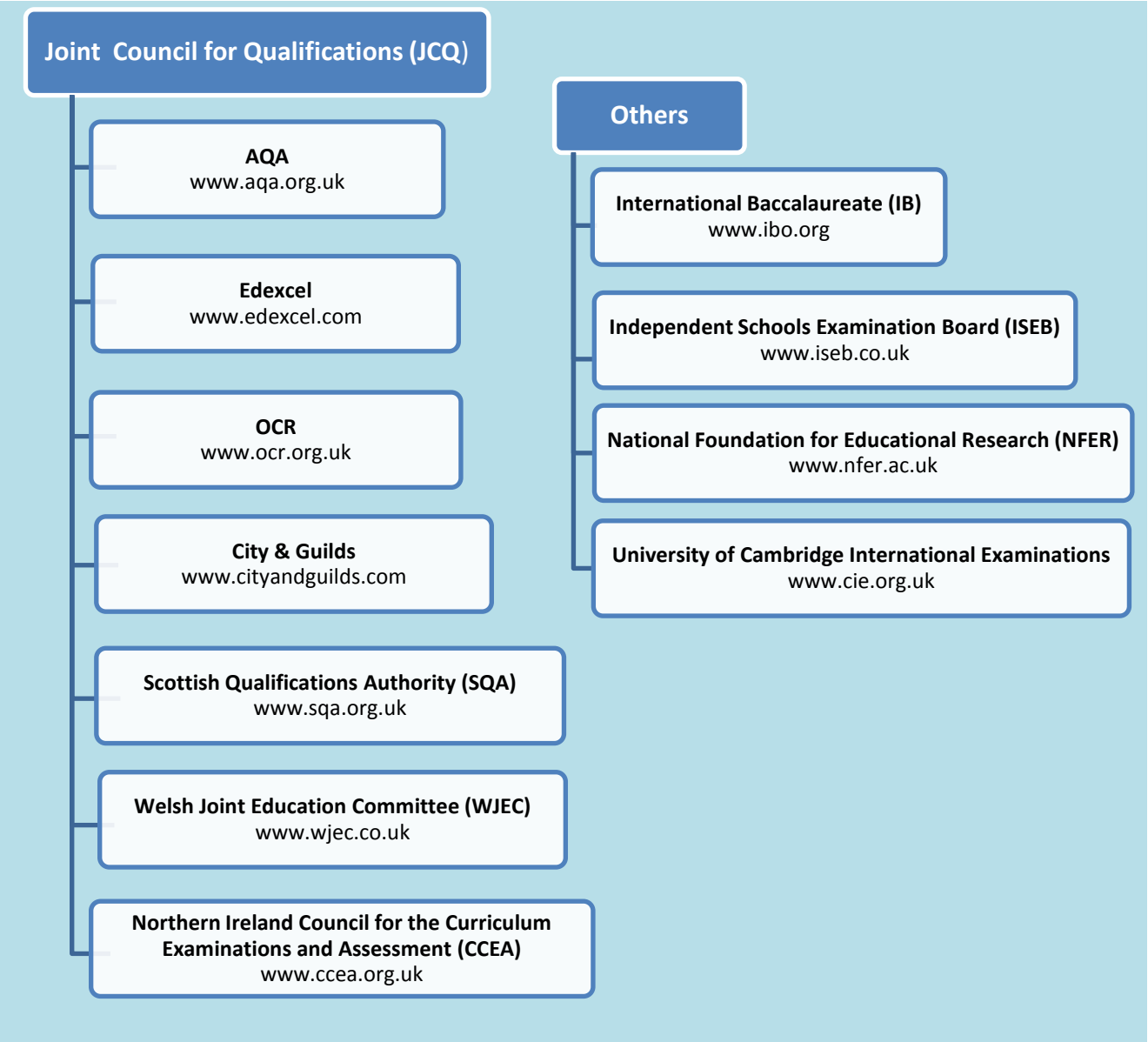
www.s-cool.co.uk - **S-Cool Revision** is a free site which provides revision help for GCSE, A-level and AS exams.

www.primaryresources.co.uk - **Primary Resources** is an excellent resource for free lessons, ideas and worksheets.

www.tes.co.uk - This is the homepage of the **Times Educational Supplement**.

www.topmarks.co.uk - **Topmarks** has thousands of links to some of the best teaching resources.

## Major Academic Exam Boards in the UK



# The National Curriculum and Making the Most of Exam Boards

### The National Curriculum

State schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, must follow the **National Curriculum** until students reach the age of 16. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)** maintains and develops the National Curriculum (http://curriculum.qca.org.uk). In Scotland, **Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)** is responsible for the development and support of the **Scottish Curriculum** (www.ltscotland.org.uk).

**Independent schools** in the UK are not obliged to adhere to the National or Scottish Curriculum.

### Making the Most of the Exam Boards

If you're tutoring a student for an examination subject, find out from them as early as possible the correct exam board. Exam boards provide essential information about their exams, including **specifications**, **syllabuses**, **notes for teachers**, **past question papers**, **mark schemes** and **reports on the examinations**. Much of this information is available for free download from their websites.

They also have a wealth of other information, resources and forums. **AQA**, for example, provides **free introductory teacher support meetings around the UK**, and you can phone their subject departments for free advice.

### Exam Boards for Major UK Exams (see list p.47)

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) (www.jcq.org.uk) represents the awarding bodies which offer the majority of the UK's qualifications. These **seven large providers of qualifications** in the UK offer GCSE, GCE, AEA, Scottish Highers, Entry Level, Vocational and vocationally-related qualifications.

### Exam Boards for 11+ and 13+ (see list p.47)

Exams at 11+ or 13+ depend very much upon the individual school, and past exam papers can sometimes be hard to obtain. Some schools write their own exams, and have a policy of not publishing past papers. To find out the specific requirements, you'll need to telephone the school or the school's Local Authority (LA).

Having said this, a number of schools and Local Authorities commission the **National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)** to write custom-made 11+ exams for them. NFER provides information on their 11+ exams here:

http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/research/assessment/eleven-plus/

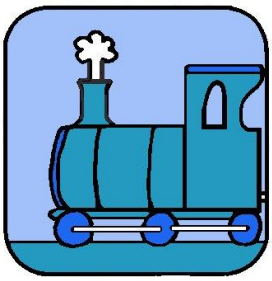
Also, some schools (particularly boarding schools) use the **Common Entrance Exam System** at **11+ or 13+**. The exam papers for this exam are the same for each school, and you can purchase them from the **Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB).**

Tutoring for the 11+ and 13+ exams is an art in itself, and is not a responsibility to be taken lightly. Obtaining the correct practice papers for the exams is only the first step. We recommend the exceptional guidance on this subject offered by www.elevenplusexams.co.uk.

### Other Exam Boards (see list p.47)

Other exams such as the **International Baccalaureate (IB)** and the **IGCSE** (available from the University of Cambridge and Edexcel) are also becoming more popular, particularly in the private sector. For details of other accredited qualifications, you can visit the **National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ):**

http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk



# 2.8 INITIATIVE

**Q: Do I take the initiative by seizing opportunities, pre-empting problems and thinking ahead?**

Effective teachers **think ahead**. Their initiative can be seen on two levels.

Firstly, **being alert and action-oriented** helps you to seize opportunities that come your way, and tackle problems before they escalate.

Secondly, **imagining a much longer view** allows you to successfully anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities that are not immediately obvious to others. For example, understanding the advantages which technology brings may help teachers make their lessons more relevant to their students' future lives.

## Advice on Lesson Planning

There are two main stages to planning for student learning:

| the **'scheme of work'** | the **'lesson plan'** |
| --- | --- |
| • An outline of the work to be covered over a period. This could be a period of a year, several months or several weeks. It includes general aims. | • This is planning for each individual lesson. It includes a general aim, but also specific objectives. |

There are no rules for planning student lessons, and many tutors won't write down their lesson plans. But even if you don't write down your lesson plans, it can be useful to think through carefully how the lesson is going to flow naturally.

Overleaf are **two possible templates** – one for a 'scheme of work' and one for a 'lesson plan'. The lesson plan includes a section where you can write down your evaluation of how you believe the lesson went.

(Both templates are based on Jon Davison, Marilyn Leask, 'Schemes of Work and Lesson Planning' and Rob Batho, 'Pedagogy and Practice' in Capel, Leask and Turner (eds.) (2005) *Learning to Teach in the Secondary School*. London: Routledge.)

**Student Scheme of Work** ©thetutorpages.com

**Date:**

**Student Name:**

**Proposed No. of Lessons:**

**Aims: What am I trying to achieve over the period in question?**
(you could consider aspects such as knowledge, skills, capabilities, understanding and attitudes of the student)

**What has the student been taught before?**
(what level of understanding has the student already reached)

**How much time is available?**
(don't forget that homework has a valuable role to play in enhancing learning)

**What resources are available?**
(this includes material resources as well as human resources such as parents and others)

**How is the work to be assessed?**
(is all assessment carried out by you, or are there outside agencies (exams etc) involved?)

**How does this work fit in with the work a student is doing at school or in other subjects?**
(particularly in academic tutoring, there will be overlap with work done at school and with other subjects. Be careful of killing one bird with two stones).

**What is to be taught later?**
(be aware of what will happen once you have stopped teaching the student)

**Student Individual Lesson Plan** ©thetutorpages.com

**Name:** **Date:** **Lesson ___ of ___**

**Area of work:**

**General Aim:**

**Specific Objectives:** (e.g. *By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to...* You can use words such as *state, describe, list, identify, prioritize, solve* and *demonstrate an understanding of* to make sure that your objectives are clear and testable.)

| Phase | Features |
|---|---|
| **Start** (10 mins) | **Starter activity** (Spend 5 minutes on a brisk mini-activity to catch the imagination. This could be linked directly with the work to come or to previous homework as a 'tester'.)<br><br>**Discuss homework** (Discuss homework and any problems that came up.) |
| **Introduction** (15 mins) | **Learning objectives and outcomes** (Introduce the lesson by sharing with the student what they are going to learn, and what outcomes are expected. *'Today we are going to learn how to...'*)<br><br>**Active teaching** (Introduce new learning by explaining, modelling or demonstrating. Don't be afraid to be 'the expert'.)<br><br>**Student participation** (Get the student to participate: to respond to questions, think, make suggestions or explain.) |
| **Development** (20 mins) | **Student applying what they know** (The student applies what they know in individual activities. Guide them through these activities, helping them to apply new skills.) |
| **End** (15 mins) | **Review** (Reviews help the student remember the key points and significance of what has been learnt. You can encourage the student to do most of the work: to explain what they've learned, and how it can be used in the future.)<br><br>**Homework** (Homework helps students to consolidate what they've learned in the lesson, or to prepare for the next one. Homework should be used to enhance or extend work done in the lesson. It shouldn't be used as a fill-in or finishing off exercise.) |

**Evaluation** (Were the objectives achieved? What went well? What needs to be addressed next time? How is the student responding?)

# 2.9 FLEXIBILITY

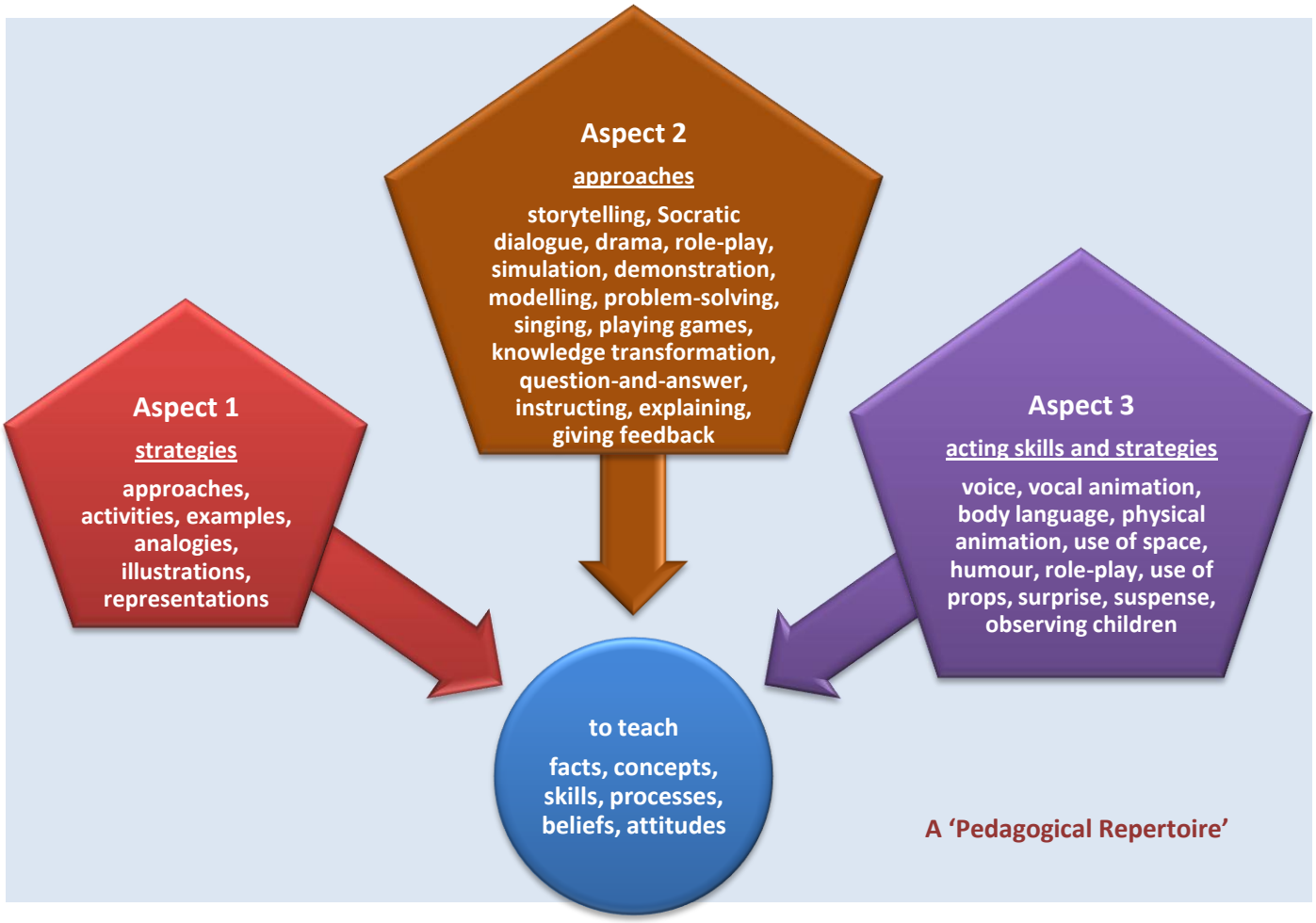
**Q: Can I be flexible and adapt to meet changing circumstances?**

Effective teachers demonstrate a high degree of flexibility. They **keep an open-mind about new ideas and approaches** and are prepared to try out new things. They are not rigid in their teaching, and will change tack if an approach is not working. They are also confident enough to be spontaneous during lessons.

## Tips on Flexibility

- **Try different approaches.** If you're not getting through to a student, try something else, drawing on your repertoire of teaching techniques.
- **Deviate from a lesson plan** to take advantage of unexpected events or a student's sudden interest in a topic. Spontaneity makes learning fun and vital.
- **Watch out** for signs of boredom, and change tack to liven things up.

According to Rosie Turner-Bisset in her book, *Expert Teaching* (2001), 'Humans like variety: the kind of teaching in which the pedagogical or organisational strategy is the same day after day, week after week, can easily generate boredom and disaffection'. She has developed the following **pedagogical repertoire**, consisting of 3 aspects which can be combined at will to achieve greater variety in lessons. For example, 'a teacher might employ the approach of **story-telling**, in order to teach ideas about taxation, and **information** about a particular period in history, but use **humour and suspense** as part of the strategies for holding his or her listeners' attention'.



# 2.10 HOLDING PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE

**Q: Do I set out clear expectations for students and hold them accountable for their performance?**

Effective teachers are **crystal clear about their expectations**, and make it known what are **acceptable standards of behaviour and performance**. They also act as role models, making it clear with students what they can expect in return from the teacher. Doing so helps students **take responsibility** and **be accountable** for themselves and their learning.

> **"I'm a firm but fair teacher with a consistent set of expectations. Once the boundaries are established, you can relax and do the crazy, creative stuff."**
>
> Ian Jamison, *Guardian* Secondary Teacher of the Year.

When performance is not up to expectations, effective teachers act quickly and capably to achieve the high standards they set. Let students and parents know that they must live up to certain expectations if they want to take lessons with you. Only you can decide on the level of strictness.

## Tips on Having High Expectations

- **Consider using a learning agreement for students.** Having a written learning agreement is a good way to demonstrate to others your own standards and professionalism, and if handled sensitively, it will impress and not intimidate potential students. Even if you don't create a written agreement, be upfront about your standards and requirements to new students (see p.13 for a sample learning agreement).
- **Aim to be positive.** 'Catch students doing something right', i.e. reaffirm the type of behaviour you do want. Students respond best when criticism is preceded by some kind of praise.
- **Create a balance of boundaries and acceptance.** Being a control freak is bad news for you and for your students. Teaching is an enabling process: you can guide students learning, but you can never do the learning for them. Understand that you can never control – only influence. On the other hand:
- **Don't hesitate.** If students don't live up to your standards, don't be afraid to pull them up on it. Confront poor performance, and correct bad behaviour. No matter where the lesson actually takes place, make it clear that students are entering your space, where your rules apply.
- **Don't let students get complacent.** Those who have been with you for a while may become a little too comfortable: you may have to remind them occasionally of who's in charge. You are always the boss.
- **Be consistent.** Students must learn the causal relationship between behaviour and your sanctions or rewards.
- **Stress the importance of reciprocal behaviour.** That is, how important it is for students to treat people in the way that they would like to be treated. You can do this by modelling respect and appropriate behaviour: "I would never talk to you in that way, and I also expect you to treat me with respect".
- **Reinforce expectations with academic rewards.** You can treat the student to something they really enjoy towards the end of the lesson.
- **Don't lecture students on bad behaviour.** Be concise and straightforward – otherwise they'll switch off.

> **Giving students a fresh start**
>
> 'Tell pupils right at the beginning that every lesson with you is a fresh start. Tell them that you've got a selective/defective memory and that you only remember the good things that happened. Emphasize this through smiling and not reminding pupils of their previous bad behaviour. *Expect* that they will behave well and express your disappointment if they don't.'
>
> Doug Belshaw

- **Expect high standards of accuracy and presentation.** Make sure students take care over their work and look after their books.
- **Involve parents.** If there's a particular behaviour you need to reinforce, mentioning it in front of the student and parent at the same time will magnify its effect. You can also talk through with parents about the high expectations they can have for their child both inside and outside your lessons.
- **Have spare copies.** If students tend to 'forget' necessary books or materials for their lessons, they won't be able to get away with it if you have your own copies.
- **Encourage students to have their own high standards at home**. You can even ask them to imagine what their teacher would say about the quality of their work when they are studying on their own.

| Standards of Conduct | Three Common Problems |
|---|---|
| **Don't let your students:**<br><br>• **fail to greet you or say goodbye properly;**<br>• **talk back to you;**<br>• **use slang;**<br>• **ignore your questions;**<br>• **overlook their mistakes;**<br>• **argue or contradict your advice;**<br>• **demonstrate boredom or a negative attitude during lessons.** | 1. **arriving late.** Make it clear that you're a busy person (even if you're not) and that being late doesn't mean the lesson can be extended.<br>2. **cancellations/ failure to pay on time**. These can be dealt with as part of a learning agreement (see p.12).<br>3. **incomplete homework.** If the student is having genuine difficulty, you can ask them to contact you during the week by email. You can also insist on some kind of record-keeping for their homework assignments (what was accomplished, and when). If the habit persists, you can experiment with making them do it during the lesson while you sit there looking bored! Keeping you happy is perhaps not the best motivation for working, but it is at least one motivation. |

**Mediocrity at its best – a cautionary tale**

'Eric slouched as he played the violin etude. "Why would anyone write anything with five sharps?" he thought. "Yikes! There goes another A-natural."

His mind was on the big baseball game tonight. Eric's coach had given him some batting drills and he couldn't wait to see if they improved his game. With his mind on hitting, he *missed* half the notes he played and forgot to look at the little numbers above them. "First and third positions are the easiest anyway," he thought. Finally he was through. "That was pretty good, Eric," said his teacher, Julie. "Let's go on to the next piece."

On to the dreadful shifting exercises. He felt like "shifting" right out of the room, but dutifully he went through the motions with the intonation only his mother could love. "You're getting better," Julie advised. "But next time try to play more in tune. Let's play your Beethoven."

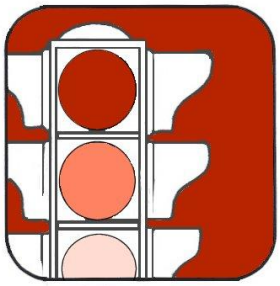
Eric slaughtered the unsuspecting Beethoven and Julie suggested that he listen to a recording. "See you at the next lesson! You're doing fine, but next week could you practice a little more?"

"Practice what?" he wondered. "I guess I didn't play as bad as I thought. When my batting is bad, my coach points it out right away and tells me how to fix it."

'Why didn't Eric's teacher give him constructive and honest feedback? Didn't she know the standard for someone Eric's age? Didn't she know how to correct his mistakes? Maybe she thought he wasn't talented or smart enough to get better, or was afraid if she was honest he might quit? Didn't she care enough about his progress to make the effort to be involved in his lessons? Was she more interested in getting him through the books than in making him a musician? Was she too tired of her job to project enthusiasm and a desire to improve?...

'Students deserve a teacher who is dedicated to helping them improve. If we don't really care how our students play, we're in the wrong business. Passing students on through the books without constant feedback will only allow them to play more, not better. The key is to provide specific feedback and deliver it in a way that enables students to listen without being defensive. This happens naturally when your relationship is based on open, two-way communication.'

Bonnie Blanchard (2007) *Making Music and Enriching Lives: A Guide for All Music Teachers*.
Bloomington: Indiana University Press.



# 2.11 MANAGING STUDENTS

**Q: Do I manage students well, by providing clear directions to them, by motivating them and acting on behalf of them?**

Managing students well requires **clear communication**. Firstly, you can get students focussed and on task by stating learning objectives and instructions at the beginning of the lesson, and by recapping and summarizing at the end of the lesson. Secondly, you can inform them about their learning correctly, letting them know about how the lesson fits into an overall programme of work, and providing feedback about progress.

Effective managing also means **taking action on behalf of your students**, and showing leadership by creating a positive, upbeat atmosphere for learning.

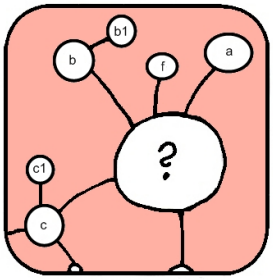
## Tips for Managing Students

- **Create a purposeful and businesslike learning environment**: make sure students are clear about what they are doing, and why they are doing it.
- **Be aware of time.** Start on time, make full use of available time, use a brisk pace, and finish with a succinct review.
- **Go out of your way** to get the best resources or materials necessary for study.
- **Order the correct books** on behalf of your students.
- **Enter your students for examinations.**
- **Manage your students' reputations**: speak well of them to others.
- **Keep students and parents informed at all stages.** If you have high expectations, make sure everyone is clear about these from the start.
- **Use a proper filing system.** Keep records on your students. Save time by using handouts on various topics and filing them properly for easy retrieval.
- **Focus on presentation.** Make sure students keep and present their work in an orderly fashion. Consider insisting on margins and double line spacing in notebooks, and a sturdy binder with dividers for handouts.
- **Develop a marking system.** For example, use bullet points to indicate points to remember, and use stars to denote tasks to be completed for homework.
- **Write instructions down for clarity.** Rather than just stating homework tasks, write them down in the student's notebook – for the sake of the student, the parents, and for you.

**An Effective Classroom Management Context**
**(these four things are fundamental)**

1. Know what you want and what you don't want.
2. Show and tell your students what you want.
3. When you get what you want, acknowledge (not praise) it.
4. When you get something else, act quickly and appropriately.

Dr Robert Kizlik




# 2.12 PASSION FOR LEARNING

**Q: Am I passionate about helping students to learn, and do I act to facilitate this?**

> **"Give a man a fire and he's warm for the day. But set fire to him and he's warm for the rest of his life."**
>
> Terry Pratchett

Effective teachers have **a deep drive to help students learn**. At the basic level, this means creating a **learning environment** which is attractive, comfortable and stimulating as a space. Secondly, **clear teaching input** and demonstrations must be used. Thirdly, **guiding students** as they practise new knowledge and skills is important, while **valuing their individual differences** in learning style.

For learning at a deep level to occur, however, students must be allowed to work out answers for themselves. Effective teachers will encourage students to make breakthroughs in their understanding by asking challenging and appropriate questions and by using other approaches which lead students to have their own insights.

Equipping students with **independent learning skills** will enable them to become confident, lifelong learners who are able to deal with the challenges ahead of them. Effective teachers help students experience learning as enjoyable and satisfying to increase their self-motivation. They consistently provide a range of opportunities for students to direct their own learning, and build students' capacity to evaluate their own learning.

Students become capable, self-motivated life-long learners – not by chance, but through your design.

## Tips for Learning

- **Focus on what and how.** Think about not only *what* you want students to learn, but on *how* you want them to learn.
- **Encourage self-awareness, self-criticism and independence in learning.** You mustn't be a crutch for learning: they must continue learning without you. Don't be a 'nice' teacher who provides all the answers.
- **Sometimes let students dictate the course of the lesson.** Giving students choice over what and how to study encourages their autonomy as learners.
- **Let students discover their own mistakes.** Encourage students to be the first to speak about their mistakes. To encourage self-reflection during lessons, ask students, "What did you do right here?" and "What did you do wrong?".
- **Show your enthusiasm**. If your delivery falls flat, your students won't be motivated to learn, even if the information you are imparting is of value.
- **Ask students to teach.** Research shows that teaching others is the highest order skill, the one where most deep learning occurs.

**Deep vs. Surface Learning**

'Research into student learning shows that students acquire, retain and assimilate information best when a 'deep', rather than 'surface', approach is encouraged. 'Surface' learning is the passive memorising and recalling of material to meet external requirements such as assessment criteria. 'Deep' learning occurs when students are able to relate material to their own experience, and to engage in critical dialogue with the material to create new knowledge.'

*'Surface' learning is:*

- reproducing the knowledge given;
- accepting knowledge passively;
- focusing only on what you need to know for assessment purposes;
- not thinking about the wider context.

*'Deep' learning is:*

- wanting to understand the knowledge given, not just for assessment;
- questioning and challenging knowledge;
- relating knowledge to your own experiences and to the wider context;
- deconstructing arguments and advancing your own argument.

Wisker et al (2008) *Working One-to-One with Students.* New York: Routledge

## A Learning Culture

Brooks & Brooks have identified the following **twelve teaching behaviours** which **promote a culture of learning**:

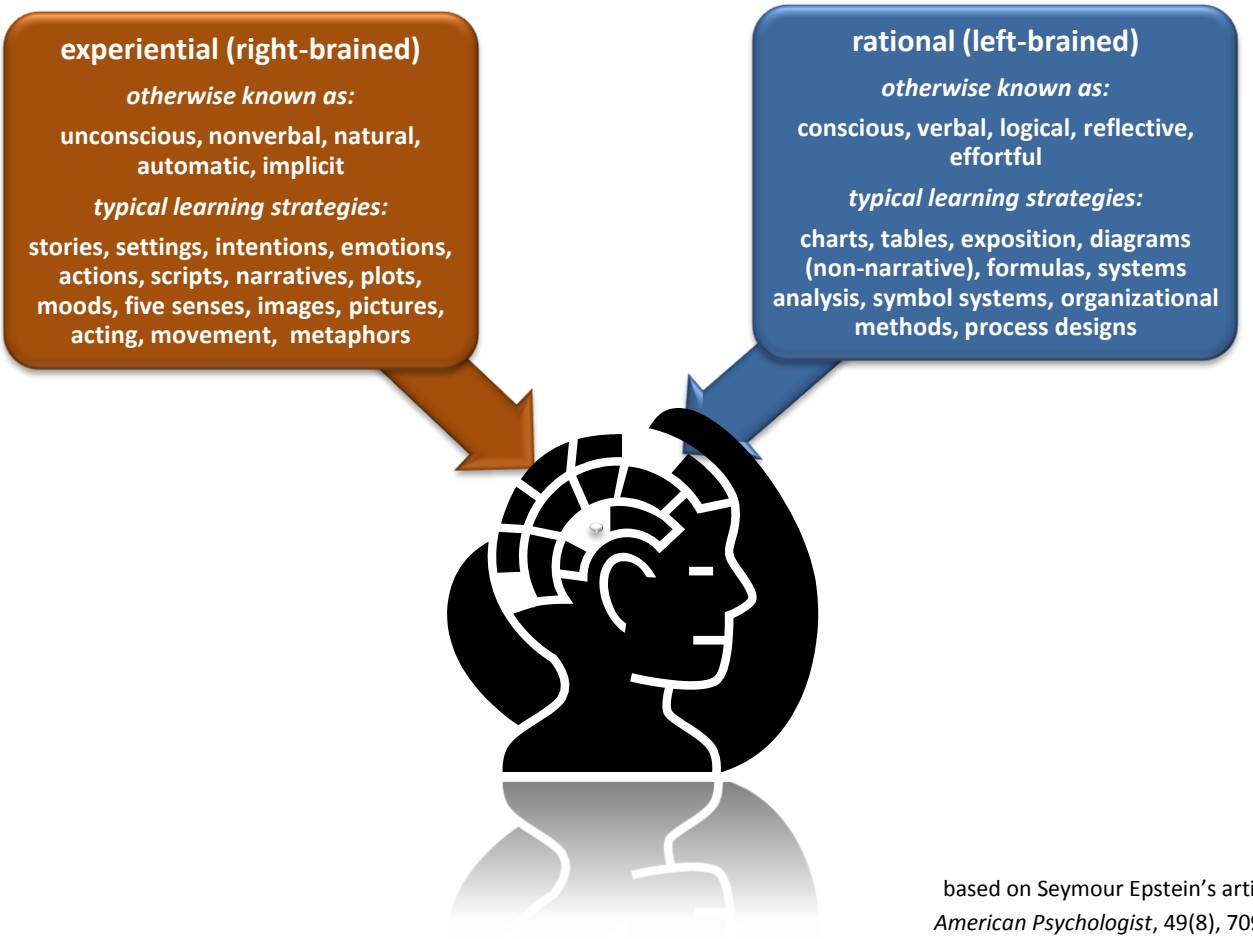
> **"I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught."**
>
> Winston Churchill

| | Behaviour | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | **encourage and accept student autonomy and initiative.** | *– students frame their own questions and find answers.* |
| 2. | **use raw data and primary sources, along with interactive and physical materials.** | *– students look for evidence rather than receiving knowledge passively and link concepts to real-life situations, events and objects.* |
| 3. | **use terminology such as 'classify', 'analyse', 'predict' and 'create'.** | *– teachers go beyond literal questions of how, what and who, thus encouraging higher-level thinking.* |
| 4. | **allow student responses to drive lessons, shift instructional strategies and alter content.** | *– the curriculum determines what must be taught, not how ... lesson content should change to best facilitate student learning* |
| 5. | **inquire about students' understandings of concepts before sharing your own understandings of these concepts.** | *– brainstorming before a new topic is taught ensures the teacher takes account of students' current understandings and interests.* |
| 6. | **encourage students to engage in dialogue.** | *– students are encouraged to present their own ideas* |
| 7. | **encourage student enquiry by asking thoughtful, open-ended questions.** | *– teachers use a range of questioning strategies* |
| 8. | **seek elaboration of students' initial responses.** | *– by using a multiple choice approach: 'What exactly do you mean? Do you mean this ..., do you mean that ..., or do you have an idea of your own' and delving.* |
| 9. | **set up contradictions to initial hypotheses to encourage discussion.** | *– for example, 'So it is wrong to steal. But would it still be wrong to rob a bank if your children were starving?'* |
| 10. | **allow 'wait time' after posing questions.** | *– students need approximately 5 seconds after the question is asked.* |
| 11. | **allow students to create links between ideas and create metaphors.** | *– providing time to ask 'what if' questions and to create metaphors for their understandings* |
| 12. | **nurture students' natural curiosity through use of the learning cycle model.** | *– i) students interact with selected materials and generate questions and hypotheses; ii) teacher focuses student's questions as a way of introducing the concept; iii) students work on new problems as a way of applying the concept.* |

**adapted from Brooks & Brooks (1993) *In search of understanding: the case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.**

## Two Modes of Processing Information

In a review of more than 30 different studies, Seymour Epstein concluded that there were **two basic modes through which humans process information**: experiential (right-brained) and rational (left-brained). Each mode has its **typical learning strategies**, and as teachers we should try to make use of both:




based on Seymour Epstein's article in *American Psychologist*, 49(8), 709-724

In respect of these two modes of processing information, Pierce Howard gives the following recommendations:

- → **ensure that your learning design contains a balance of experiential and rational learning strategies;**
- → **for every point you explain, tell a story to illustrate it;**
- → **for every story you tell, identify the concept or point that it illustrates. This is the technique for Aesop's fables, in which every story ends with an aphorism;**
- → **for every activity, talk about it;**
- → **for every lecture, conduct an experiment.**

**Pierce J. Howard (2006) *The Owner's Manual for the Brain*. Austin: Bard Press.**

**For more on learning styles see Chapter 2.15 'Understanding Others' p.64**

# 2.13 IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

**Q: Do I use vivid actions and deliberate influencing strategies to persuade students and others to produce desired outcomes?**

> **"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."**
>
> Henry B. Adams

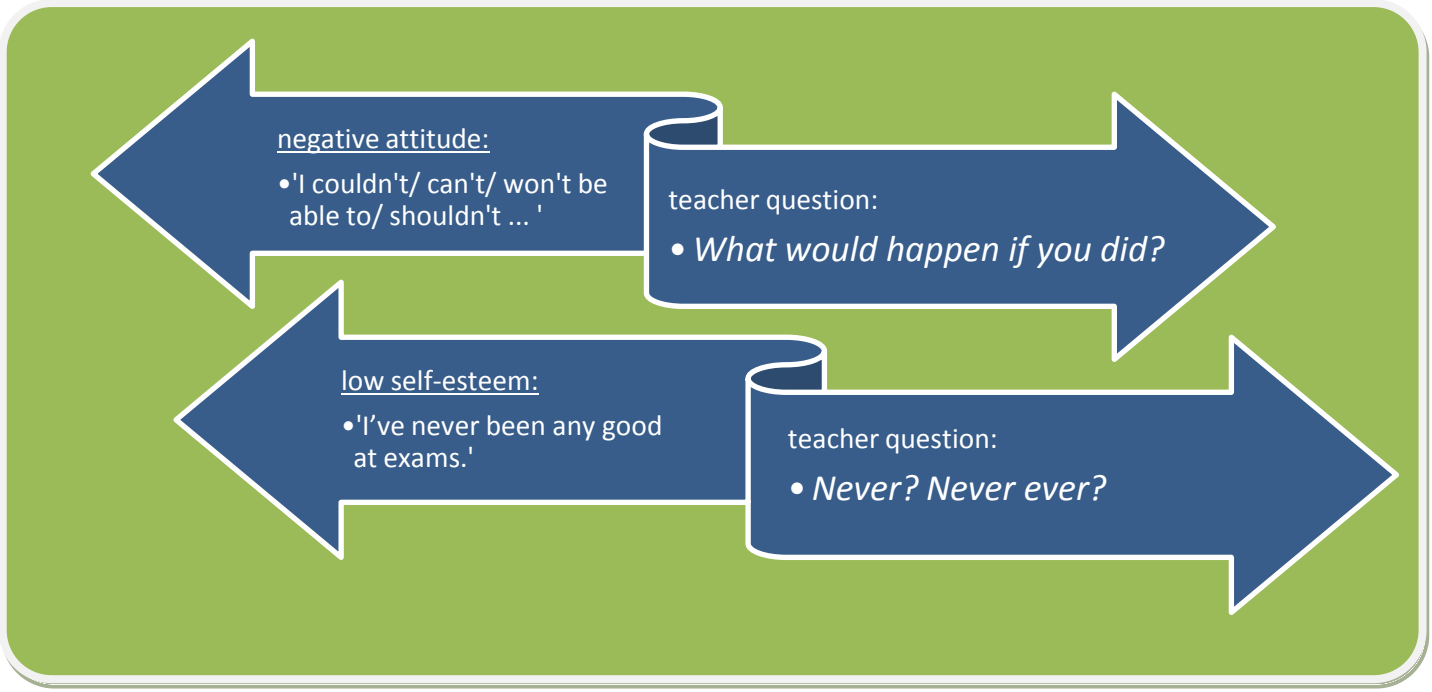
Effective teachers find ways to put across their subject in appealing ways. They will often design something in a lesson to have a **vivid or memorable** impact. Effective teachers calculate lesson content so that it is **intellectually stimulating and challenging**, but also so that it offers **plenty of variety** so that students enjoy their learning (see Chapter 2.9 'Flexibility').

The **ability to influence** is also crucial, in particular when students are flagging or when they have experienced a setback. Being creative, having a range of teaching techniques, and using rewards can be useful here.

Successful influencing is also particularly important in dealing with parents. This can be called **indirect influencing**, garnering the support of other people involved to achieve learning outcomes.

Never underestimate the influence you can have on your students' lives. Don't only think in terms of passing on subject knowledge: your wisdom, guidance and support can have a lasting impact.

## Two Questions for Successful Influencing



In his book ***Motivating students to learn*** (1998), Jere Brophy states that **motivation** depends on both *students' expectations of success* **and** *the value they place on the task*, i.e.:

If either one of these is missing (i.e. zero) then there will be no motivation. Brophy has identified a number of **useful strategies** that teachers can employ to enhance student motivation.

**Strategies for Increasing Expectation of Success**

- ***provide opportunities for success*** (for example, make tasks open-ended so that a variety of answers are acceptable, divide lengthy assignments into shorter 'doable' parts, allow extra time, re-teach material rather than ploughing ahead, vary instructional approaches – i.e. learning styles).
  - ***teach students to set reasonable goals and to assess their own performance*** (some students are happy just to scrape a pass, and others believe that anything less than 100% is a failure).
  - ***help students recognize the relationship between effort and outcome*** (this means deemphasizing the link between ability (or lack of it) and outcome: "You really did well on your test: see how all that extra work you put in has paid off?").
- ***provide informative feedback*** (students need to know how they're progressing. Point out strengths first, then weaknesses, and then an encouragement for further effort).
- ***provide special motivational support to discouraged students*** (reframing can help here: see the following page).

**Strategies for Increasing Perceived Value**

- ***relate lessons to students' own lives*** (as a personal tutor, you are in a unique position to include information relevant to the student's interest. For example, a maths teacher might make up questions which include the student in them).
  - ***provide opportunities for choice*** (research shows that when students experience a sense of autonomy, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated).
  - ***model interest in learning and express enthusiasm for the material*** (communicate the fact that you too love learning: "I love problems like this", "This is my favourite part", "This is a lot of fun!")
- ***include novelty/variety elements*** (for example, use props, and don't be predictable)
- ***provide opportunities for students to respond actively*** (avoid too much passivity in your students: they must be actively involved. Role plays are a useful tool.)
- ***allow students to create finished products*** (the sense of accomplishment that comes from a completed project (such as a short story, fully edited, illustrated and bound) increases motivation).
- ***provide opportunities for students to interact with peers*** (this can be tricky in a tutoring environment – however, see Chapter 2.14 'Teamworking').
- ***provide extrinsic rewards*** (The first type of extrinsic rewards are ***social rewards*** such as a smile, a thumbs up or verbal praise. To be effective, these must be both ***specific and sincere***. The second type of rewards are ***special activities*** which you allow students to engage in following good behaviour or achievement. Find out what your students like doing. For example, playing a game or drawing something during the lesson can be very reinforcing. The third type of extrinsic rewards are ***tangible, material rewards*** such as sweets, key rings and stickers and stationery. The jury is still out on the benefits of tangible rewards, with some research suggesting that it actually undermines intrinsic motivation. If you do use material rewards, the advice is therefore to: a) save such rewards for activities students find boring (if the student is already enjoying the activity, there is no point using them) b) provide them unexpectedly at the end of a task (so that it doesn't come across as bribery) c) if the reward is an expected one, make sure that it is rewarded for an agreed level of performance – not just for engagement in the task d) select rewards that your students actually like – older students won't necessarily be impressed with stickers or a gold star.

## Reframing for Discouraged Students

Our brains often like to link things together and construct meaning when there is none. This process is a continual one, and unfortunately leaves little trace behind. Sometimes the process can bring us benefits (for example, for those who are natural optimists) but more often than not it can create impoverished models of reality.

When a student becomes discouraged or lacks confidence, it's likely that they've created a meaning or link between things that it isn't useful to have linked. One way that you can help them is to use **reframing exercises** to help them break up and 'unlink' the unhelpful connections they've made in their mind.

Here are examples of the most common linking processes:

| Common Linking Processes | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Equivalence: "This X means this Y"** ("People like me who are good at sports are never really academic. That's what my dad thinks, anyway.") | **Cause and Effect : "This X leads to this Y"** ("I'm just useless at science, and that's why I always get low marks.") | **Identification: "This X means this Y about me"** ("I never suck up to the teacher and that's probably why I get rubbish marks.") | **External Behaviour leads to Internal State: "When this X happens, I feel Y"** ("I'm just no good at maths (External Behaviour), and that's why I hate it (Internal State)") |

**Reframing Exercises**

You can encourage students to have fun challenging their beliefs, breaking their unhelpful associations and creating new meanings. There are many ways to reframe. In the below example, we consider a student lacking confidence in maths:

- **Reframe the External Behaviour**: It's not that you're bad at maths, it just that you haven't found a way to understand it that suits you. There are plenty of ways to understand a subject, and I'm sure we can find a way.
- **Reframe the Internal State**: I'll bet that it isn't that you hate maths. It's more likely that you're frustrated because of the way it was taught before, and that you're angry that no-one took the time to explain it to you in a way that you can enjoy.
- **Find a Counter Example**: Can you think of a time when you enjoyed maths? You know, playing the lottery is a kind of maths, or any time that you say, 'I'll bet…'. Even when you throw a ball, your mind and body is doing some very clever maths indeed!
- **Outcome Framing**: What's going to happen to your success level if you keep thinking this way? What's your life going to be like in a year's time, or five years' time?
- **Global Framing**: Think for a minute about all the other students of your ability around the country taking maths exams. There are going to be thousands and thousands of them. Do you think that not a single one of them has ever got the grade that you're after now?
- **Reflexive Framing**: Do you think that I would be teaching you if I didn't believe that you're good at this stuff? Do you think that I would be teaching this if I thought it was impossible to learn it?
- **Divide up into Components**: What happens specifically when you get this feeling you can't do it? What happens first exactly? And what happens straight after that? How exactly do you feel? Can you break up the sequence that makes you feel bad?

# 2.14 TEAMWORKING

**Q: Do I work effectively with others to achieve shared goals?**

Teaching is demanding, and co-operation and support help create the positive climate which is necessary for continued success.

Working as a private tutor, you might feel that you have few opportunities to work as a team. However, there are opportunities to think as a team: in particular, **the student-parent-teacher relationship**, **a student's sense of belonging to your teaching practice** and **the relationship you can build with other tutors**.

> **"No man is an island, entire of itself."**
>
> John Donne

Building up team spirit means that you can help, support and co-operate with others to bring about the best learning outcomes. You can share good ideas, and communicate effectively with others – for example, with parents about their children's progress.

Conversely, teamwork also includes being open to the ideas and opinions of others. This may include asking for feedback on your own work from students, parents and others.

## Tips for Working with Parents:

- **Involve parents!** Many have no idea how crucial their role can be in their child's success.
- **Encourage parents to see their role as 'partners' in the education process**, rather than as 'customers'.
- **Educate parents on their role**: assisting with homework/practice, setting high expectations, engaging in intellectual stimulation and discussion with the child, encouraging an interest in the subject beyond the lesson and attending lessons if appropriate.
- **Experiment with using email** to stay in touch with parents and students. Compared to phone calls, it can be an efficient but personal way to keep parents informed and encouraged about their child's progress. You can also send group emails to parents and students, and encourage their feedback.
- **Occasionally, use your lessons for a 'progress review'.** Annually or bi-annually you can invite parents and student to have an open and frank discussion so that any important concerns and priorities can be raised. Make sure that the child's opinions are also valued. Placing such a high emphasis on good communication will eventually pay off in terms of improved student retention rates.
- **Decide whether it would be helpful for parents to attend lessons**. The disadvantages are that parents can distract the child, interfere with the learning or undermine your authority. In such cases, you may have to be assertive in letting parents know the ground rules. The advantages are that it lets them know that you are open and confident in your teaching, that you value their role, and that they can pick up useful information to help their child at home. Parents need not attend every lesson, or the whole lesson, and inviting them for 10 minutes at the end of a lesson may be all that's required.

**The Importance of Parental Involvement**

In 2003, **Charles Deforges** completed an influential report for the British government which confirmed the crucial impact of parental involvement on pupil attainment.

He asserted that his report's most important finding was that parental involvement 'has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups.'

## Tips for Creating a Sense of Belonging to Your Teaching Practice

Having a sense of belonging is a basic human need, and is especially important for young people. If you can create a successful teaching environment which students feel proud and honoured to belong to, they will work hard to meet your expectations.

- **Cultivate a sense of pride among your students,** that they are privileged members of your elite group. "All of my students are good at X, and so I know you'll be too".
- **Use a noticeboard** to display pictures/ postcards/ posters etc. given to you by your students. This can foster a community feeling among your students, and a sense of belong to the 'club'.
- **Introduce your students to each other.** Younger students can look up to older or more advanced students, and even be supported by them. Introduce parents and students who come for lessons next to each other to encourage friendships.
- **Encourage pride in your students when another student achieves something special.** Take care to discourage rivalry or jealousy among your students, and instead make sure that they feel lucky to belong to a group of high achievers. Remind them that they should be aiming for a personal best, and that their biggest competitor is actually themselves.
- **Ask students and parents for feedback.** This lets them know that you value their opinions highly, and that you're willing to compromise if necessary. High standards are important, but make sure that the workload for students is appropriate.

## Tips for Working with Other Teachers:

- **Join online teacher communities** – for example, a chat room, or mailing list.
- **Share advice and problems with other teachers** in person or electronically.
- **Join a professional organisation** (such as a society or union) for support, encouragement and advice.
- **Leave behind any inferiority or superiority complexes:** be open and humble enough to accept new approaches and ask for advice and suggestions from other teachers. Don't feel threatened by them.

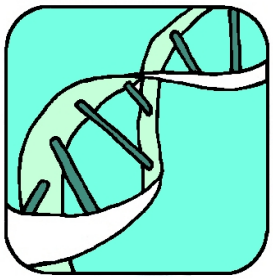
**An Example of Teamwork: The Suzuki Method**

The Suzuki Method of music education is based on the philosophy and teaching methods developed by the Japanese violinist and educator, Dr. Shinichi Suzuki. Teamwork is at the very heart of the method, with the parent-teacher-child 'triangle' held up as a fundamental principle. Parents attend every lesson (children commonly start from the age of four), and the child's progress is seen to be the result of the partnership between the parent, teacher and child. Parents help the child practise each day, reinforcing the teacher's directions and noting any difficulties. Teachers will often involve the parent during the lesson (helping with games, encouraging praise, making sure the parent understands a technique etc).

Children of all ages need the support of their parent or guardian in order to succeed, and the Suzuki Method recognises how vital the teaching role of the parent can be – it is they, after all, who taught the child to speak. It is often the case that the children who make the fastest progress are the ones with the most involved parents. However, the difference between involvement and pressure should be noted. Children respond best to praise and positive reinforcement, and phrases such as: "You played it right at home – why can't you do it now?", "I'll be very disappointed if you don't play your best in this concert" and "James played this piece months ago and he's a year younger than you" have a negative impact on a child's self-esteem and progress, and are discouraged by teachers.

Teamwork is also encouraged in the group lessons that Suzuki students attend in addition to their individual lesson. Here, children mix socially and musically with the teacher's other students, and learn from each other as well as the teacher. Seeing other more advanced students is often a great motivator, and gives the younger children something to aspire to. Parents also find it useful to meet other Suzuki parents, and the support they receive from each other can be invaluable. Suzuki teachers themselves benefit from many opportunities to work closely with and learn from colleagues at the numerous nation-wide children's courses organised throughout the year.

See www.britishsuzuki.org.uk for more details.



# 2.15 UNDERSTANDING OTHERS

**Q: Do I understand the meaning of, and reasons for, other people's behaviour? Am I aware of what others are thinking and feeling?**

Effective teachers have a deep insight into **why students and others act in the way they do.** As a private tutor you'll have the unrivalled opportunity to get to know students as individuals who have their own technical strengths and weaknesses, their own learning styles, emotional make-up, interests and motivations.

> **"Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but most from my students."**
>
> The Talmud

Tuning in to students as individuals is very powerful.

Firstly, the better you know your students, the better you'll be able to teach them: **you'll be able to develop approaches and tailor materials** to match the specific needs of the student.

> **"We worry about what a child will be tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."**
>
> Stacia Tauscher

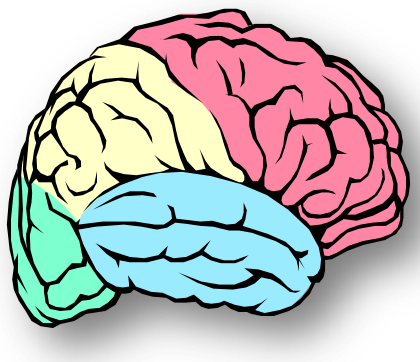
Secondly, students feel valued when a teacher has gone to the trouble of really understanding them. Feeling valued **builds their self-esteem and trust**, both of which are essential for learning to take place. You'll become an important person in their lives, and they'll work even harder to please you.

Finally, you'll **gain energy, inspiration and motivation** from your students when you genuinely care about them. This is so much better than thinking about them as the next pay cheque!

## Tips for Understanding Others

- **Stay in tune with your students' emotions.** You'll need to observe body language to work out how students are feeling from non-verbal cues. Understand the significance of student behaviour, even when this is not overtly expressed; pay attention to 'mixed messages'.
- **Try to be objective** in assessing students' strengths, weaknesses and ongoing behaviour.
- **Find out what motivates students as individuals**, and vary your motivational strategies accordingly. Motivations to study can be multiple and varied: to do well in an exam, to get a good grade, to keep up with peers, to get attention, to use a skill in the 'real world', to have something for the CV, to study something as a diversion from stress, to get into college, to appease parents, to please the teacher etc.
- **Start each lesson with a short conversation** about the student's last week, their plans for the weekend, their family etc. Some students may need to talk a little about their day before they settle down.
- **Become interested in students as individuals.** Make mental notes about the things they tell you: their birthday, their best friend's name, their hobbies, their other school work. Watch their surprised reaction when you remember something outside your lessons that's important to them.
- **Recognize that, no matter how hard you try, your teaching style will not suit everyone.** There may be a personality clash: don't be afraid to decide that it's not working.

## Boys and Girls Learn Differently



**The *corpus callosum*, which connects the two hemispheres of the brain, is larger in girls; the *amygdala*, responsible for certain aggressive responses, is larger in boys. When emotion is processed in female brains, activity tends to move towards the upper brain where it can be verbalized and reasoned out; in male brains, it more often moves down towards the brain stem, where fight-or-flight responses are triggered. The brain's left hemisphere, primarily associated with verbal skills, is used more by girls; the brain's right hemisphere, primarily associated with spatial skills, is used more by boys. When female estrogen is high, girls perform better in exams; when male testosterone is high, boys perform better in maths tests, but worse in language exams.**

**The resting female brain is as active as the activated male brain.**

Year on year, more and more startling discoveries are made which indicate that the brains of boys and girls differ developmentally, structurally, chemically, hormonally and functionally. Educators of all kinds can use this knowledge, not to stereotype or limit learning, but (in the words of Michael Garian) 'to add wisdom to the individuality already assumed in every human'. There is a spectrum, not a polarity, of male and female brain development, with girls leaning towards the female and boys leaning towards the male, but with exceptions all along the way.

**With this caveat in mind**, it may help tutors to think through the implications for their own teaching of the following areas where differences in learning style have been observed:

- **Deductive and Inductive Reasoning.** Boys frequently start their reasoning process from a general principle and then apply it. Girls tend to favour inductive thinking and begin with concrete examples.
- **Abstract and Concrete Reasoning.** Boys tend to be better at calculating without seeing or touching the object, and they also enjoy abstract arguments and debates about abstract principles. Girls will find a subject such as maths easier when it is taken out of the world of signs and signifiers and expressed more concretely.
- **Use of Language**. During the learning process, girls will often use words as they learn, while boys can be found working silently. Girls also often tend to prefer usable, everyday language and concrete detail, whereas boys often enjoy jargon and coded language.
- **Logic and Evidence**. On the whole, girls are better listeners than boys. They feel greater security in the complex flow of conversation or with a lack of logical sequencing. On the other hand, boys tend to hear less, are more interested in the control of a conversation, and ask for clear evidence to support a teacher's claims.
- **The Likelihood of Boredom.** Boys get bored more easily, and require more and varying stimulants to keep them interested. Girls are better at self-management in all aspects of learning.
- **Use of Space**. Especially at a younger age, boys will often use up a lot of space while learning. This shouldn't be viewed as impolite or out of control: they are just learning in the way their spatial brains learn.
- **Movement**. Girls generally don't need to move around much when learning. With boys, movement seems both to help them stimulate their brains and to relieve impulsive behaviour. For boys in particular, stretch breaks and movement breaks can be helpful.
- **Sensitivity and Group Dynamics**. It seems that girls are better at learning while adhering to a code of social interaction, while boys are not so sensitive to the emotions of others around them. Research also suggests that, while hierarchies or pecking orders are important for both boys and girls, boys are less resilient when it comes to feeling they have low status. They secrete more of the stress hormone cortisol when at the bottom of a pecking order, which can seriously interfere in their ability to learn.
- **Use of Symbolism.** Especially when older, boys tend towards the use of symbolic texts, diagrams and graphs because such learning materials stimulate the right hemisphere. Girls tend to be more comfortable with the written word. In literature classes, for example, boys may make much of the imagery and symbolism of a text, while girls may be more interested in the emotional complexity of its characters.
- **Use of Learning Teams.** Although both boys and girls benefit from group work, boys will tend to form structured teams with clear leaders, with girls creating looser organizations.

(adapted from Gurian, Michael (2001), *Boys and Girls Learn Differently! A Guide for Teachers and Parents*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass)

## Nine Attributes of the Adult Learner

In a landmark study in the 1970s, Malcolm Knowles identified **nine attributes of the adult learner**. These nine attributes remain respected in the field, and are still generally thought to cover the main concerns of adult learners today.

| Nine Attributes of the Adult Learner |
|---|
| **1: Control of Their Learning**<br>Adults want control of their learning. They want to control the topics, location, time frame and the mode (face-to-face, group meetings, online etc). |
| **2: Immediate Utility**<br>Adult learners are unequivocally pragmatic. Not only do they want to use what they've learnt, they tend to want to use it now. Whether they are attending a yoga class or being trained how to use a new software program, they like to see the obvious and immediate application of it. |
| **3: Focus on Issues that Concern Them**<br>Adult learners have very specific goals which relate directly to their very personal concerns. They want to learn how a topic relates to them, and are reluctant to stray off into issues which do not concern them directly. |
| **4: Test Their Learning as They Go**<br>Adult learners like to test that they know what they know. Rather than being interested in background information and general theory, they are far more concerned with checking how they are doing as they proceed towards competence. They're interested in the mini-successes along the way. For example, an adult learning to use a computer for the first time wants to test their ability to handle simpler bits of information (such as connecting to the internet correctly) before learning more complex tasks such as joining an online forum. |
| **5: Anticipate How They Will Use Their Learning**<br>Closely related to point 2, throughout their learning, adults anticipate an application to what they are learning. Children may learn mostly for the sake of learning. If an adult is learning French, they will want to know conversational rather than literary language because they have a holiday home there. |
| **6: Expect Performance Improvement**<br>Adults expect to see a noticeable improvement in their performance, and are continuously self-appraising. They may be quick to blame the teacher if they cannot see an improvement. |
| **7: Maximize Available Resources**<br>The most effective adult teachers take advantage of adults' relative autonomy in learning, and maximize the available resources by providing photocopies, bibliographies and website addresses. |
| **8: Require Collaborative, Respectful, Mutual and Informal Climate**<br>Adult learners tend to like collaboration and sharing in their learning. The collaborative spirit often drives their learning, and they relish the opportunity to meet in relatively unstructured and informal social settings to discuss and articulate their ideas. |
| **9: Rely on Information That is Appropriate and Developmentally Paced**<br>Adults like to contribute to the pace of learning, being more 'metacognitive' about their learning than young learners. They know what they do not know, and like learning to be paced incrementally without giant leaps forward to information which goes beyond their comfort zone. As soon as they sense a 'leap', they will back up and almost demand a pace that suits them. |
| based on Malcolm Knowles (1973) *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. Houston, TX: Gulf Professional Publishing. |

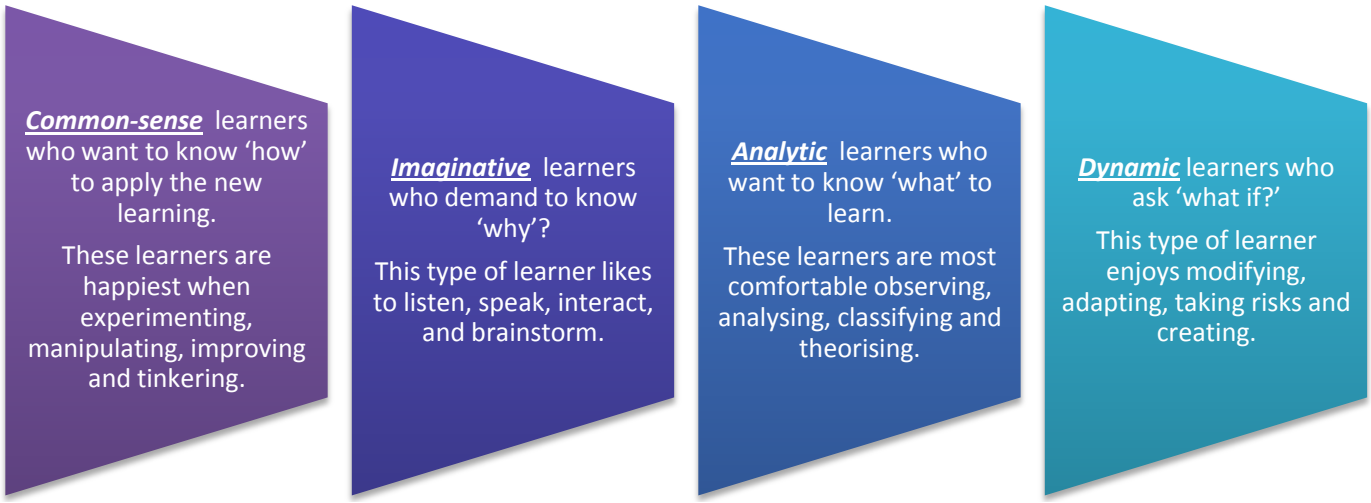
## A Note on Learning Styles

According to popular science, everybody has particular 'learning styles' through which they learn best. For example, there is the well-known model where learners are classed as predominantly **visual**, **auditory** or **kinaesthetic** (**'VAK'**). Then there is Howard Gardner's influential theory of **multiple intelligences** which consists of 8 (or more) intelligences: *interpersonal*, *intrapersonal*, *naturalist*, *verbal/ linguistic*, *musical/ rhythmic*, *visual/ spatial*, *bodily/ kinaesthetic*, and *logical/ mathematical*.

The good thing about such approaches is that they are sometimes used to recognize and celebrate students' strengths and abilities, thus raising confidence and self-esteem.

On the other hand, the science behind learning styles is very shaky. The most in-depth research on the subject conducted in the UK (LSRC, 2004) noted that there was 'a serious failure of accumulated theoretical coherence and an absence of well-grounded findings, tested through replication'. Critics have argued that there is a danger in labelling students or pandering to individual learning styles, and that we should instead be encouraging students to be adaptable and versatile.

Having said this, if an awareness of learning styles brings variety to the student's learning experience, it cannot but be useful. Perhaps the best example of modern day learning styles is Bernice McCarthy's **4MAT system**, which has been widely implemented in the US:

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