

Section: Instruction
Topic: General Rules of Good Instruction

Being a peer tutor can be a lot of fun - especially when your training session runs smoothly and the student you are working with learns how to do the activity! There are certain "rules of thumb" that will help you be a more effective tutor. Once these general "rules" become a good habit that you include in your lessons, you will be able to get on with the fun of helping students learn new activities.

After finishing this section, you will be able to list the rules of good instruction and pinpoint how these rules can improve instruction.

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Be Prepared

When you come into the classroom it's important to get ready for your teaching assignment right away. You should sign in, get your instructional packet, get any additional instructional materials you may be using, and, if necessary, remind the students you are teaching to check their schedules and get ready for their next activity. Within five minutes of the start of the class period you should be 'ready to fly', i.e., teach in the classroom, or leave for a school or community lesson.

Follow Your Schedule

Follow the schedule set up for you. For example, if you're supposed to teach price reading in the classroom for 10 minutes and then shop in the community for 40 minutes, try to keep to this schedule. End instruction on time. If you are in the community, leave the training site early enough to get to your next class on time. If you have any questions about the student, the lesson, or the schedule please don't hesitate to ask.

Follow the Lesson Plan

For most instructional activities you will have a lesson plan which lists the steps of the activity. Also, there may be a script which tells you what to say or do for each step in the activity. While teaching, you want to make sure the students you work with perform each step in the activity in the order that the steps are listed. You should try not to let the student(s) skip any steps. If there is a script, you should become familiar with the cues and actions the script asks you to do, and use these cues and actions while teaching.

As you become proficient with a lesson plan, it may be acceptable to ad lib a little instead of always saying exactly what the lesson tells you to say. As long as this does not interfere with the student's progress, and the teacher is aware of what you are doing, it should be OK.

Be Enthusiastic and Positive

The best planned and sequenced program can put your student right to sleep (or at least off-task) if you teach as though you are bored and would rather be somewhere else. BE ENTHUSIASTIC AND POSITIVE! Put energy into your teaching. Smile. Move around. Change the tone of your voice. Ask your students questions frequently. Reinforce correct responses. Start and end your teaching on a positive note. Let the student know you really enjoy working with them. Being positive and enthusiastic really helps students pay better attention, learn faster, and look forward to working with you again.

Keep a Quick Pace

In the classroom, if you present directions to the students very slowly, with long delays between different tasks, i.e., you say "Look at the clock", 5 seconds later you say, "What time is it?", 5 seconds later you say, "Find the same time on your schedule", you will find the student looking out the window, tipping his chair, or perhaps asking you about your weekend. You should always try to keep a brisk and lively pace while teaching. When you do this you will find the student paying better attention, responding faster and often more correctly and generally being more cooperative.

Have Fun!

Teaching students with handicaps can be a lot of fun--especially when you follow these general rules of instruction. Let the student get to know you. Be lighthearted. Don't be overly serious. A good sense of humor is always appreciated by both the students and the classroom staff.

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Assignment #: _____
Due Date: _____
Name: _____

Below are situations where some aspect of instruction has been provided. For each situation, your task is to decide if there was a problem with the instruction provided; if so, what the problem was; and what you would have done instead.

1. The tutor is teaching Karen and Amy to put various prices, i.e., .99, 2.95 from a worksheet of price examples onto a calculator. The tutor says, "Karen, put this price on your calculator," and points to a price on the worksheet. Karen immediately punches the correct amount on her calculator. The tutor says, "OK, let's see," pauses 5 seconds, and then says, "put this one on your calculator." Karen again responds correctly. The tutor then turns to Amy and says, "Now it's your turn," pauses 10 seconds, and then says, "Why don't you do . . . this one," and points to a price. Amy looks at the price for 10 seconds, then puts it on the calculator correctly.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?
2. The tutor comes into the classroom and tells Mark to get his things and get ready to go shopping. While Mark is getting ready, the tutor signs in and starts talking to another tutor. Seeing that Mark is standing by the door waiting to go, the tutor goes over to him and says, "OK, let's go." As they're leaving the school grounds the tutor realizes he doesn't have the instructional packet for this activity. "Mark, we have to go back to school. I forgot something." They return to school, and 30 minutes into the class period they are finally on their way to go shopping.
 - a. Is there a problem?
 - b. What is the problem?
 - c. What would you do instead?