

Peer Tutor Guide

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How do you help a peer who comes to the Writing Center, essay in hand (or perhaps ideas in head)? What do you look for? What do you say? Remember this proverb: “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.” Tutoring is in fact teaching, and the latter requires skills. For instance, you need to be especially good at asking questions because they will allow your peer into the tutorial process, and that involvement is crucial. At all times, your peer must be part of the process. Therefore, providing a brief guide, this manual offers practical tips for peer writing tutors, such as how to begin, how to help with content, how to assist with grammatical and citation needs, and how to work with ESL students.

Beginning the Tutoring Process

You will need notepaper in order to jot down necessary information about your peer’s assignment and to create illustrations of your points. In fact, try never to write on your peer’s paper; that’s his or her job. Before you get to “work,” set up your tutorial as follows:

1. Position your peer next to you or perpendicular to you (i.e., kitty corner). If the person sits across from you, then he or she forces you to be a juror (or an executioner), and you cannot read your peer’s essay together. Side by side, you both can focus on the paper at the same time; therefore, you both work on the paper—as equals. Remember that you are here to help your peer improve his or her paper, not to write the paper; that is, you need to teach, not give.
2. Exchange names. On the top of your notepaper, write the person’s name. Throughout the tutorial, refer to your peer by name in order to foster trust and camaraderie.
3. Place the essay between you and the writer so that you both have equal access to it. You won’t really be able to do this if you sit across from the person. During the tutorial, since you both will work on the essay, you must share it.
4. Ask your peer how you can help him or her. In other words, does the person want help with content, with grammar, or with both? If your peer wants a grammar check, you can dive right into the paper (working sentence by sentence), but if content is a concern, then you must take a different route (going paragraph by paragraph).

Step one bears repeating: If you set up the tutorial incorrectly, you will most likely have ruined it from the start. Remember that you and your peer are equals; you’re working together. Again, get comfortable asking your peer questions because tutoring requires dialogues, not soliloquies.

Analyzing a Peer’s Paper for Content Requirements

To help with content, you need to know what the teacher wants, so ask if the professor provided a directions sheet. Most students will have written directions (in their notes or on a handout), which you must review carefully, asking questions to clarify the

information—both for you and for the writer. Jot down key words and/or questions from the direction's sheet; compare your notes with your peer and the directions. Be sure that you both have the same "big picture" concerning what the teacher wants. Pay special attention to the assignment's purpose, to length requirements, and to key words that should appear in your peer's essay.

If no written directions are available, question your peer thoroughly about the assignment (and take brief notes on the answers): What topic was assigned? What purpose does the paper have? Who is the audience? How long should the paper be? How many paragraphs were required or suggested? Are quotations mandated? What research format was designated? Ask any questions that will help you to understand the assignment, especially the paper's thesis. Once you comprehend the essay's big picture, you can analyze for content. To do so, focus on one paragraph at a time; in other words, instead of reading the whole essay (while your peer sits and waits), focus first on the Introduction.

Opening Paragraphs

The most important element in the first paragraph is the thesis, the essay's main idea—i.e., your peer's reason for writing. About your peer's thesis, determine these factors:

- **Is the thesis clear?** Sometimes a writer will state topic sentence ideas (previewing the body paragraphs) but neglect to add a clear thesis. Remember that a thesis is just a statement containing the essay's topic and a controlling idea—i.e., what the writer says about the topic. To assist in highlighting a thesis, writers can add a transition, such as "In fact."
- **Is the thesis comprehensive?** Does it include key terms from the directions? By focusing on an assignment's key words, the writer will more likely do what the teacher wants.
- **Does the thesis stand out?** Does it end the opening paragraph, rather than hide within it? At the end of the Introduction, a thesis will stand out and lead directly to the first supporting paragraph.

The thesis' importance cannot be overstated, because in order to analyze your peer's essay, you must know what he or she is trying to explain or argue. For example, if an assignment requires your peer to analyze an argument (the writer's topic), then the controlling idea of "effective" or "ineffective" will probably focus the paper. However, if the teacher creates a position paper, then your peer will have to argue one side of an issue (the writer's topic), and the controlling idea of "should" or "should not" will focus the content. Therefore, if you can't see a clear thesis at the end of your peer's introduction, then make a point of it and help your peer to create one. Remember that you should not write on your peer's paper; involve your peer into the tutorial process.

Besides analyzing the thesis, you can also critique the opening paragraph's content for these two elements:

1. A hook—does the first sentence (or two or more) catch the reader's interest? If not, suggest that your peer begin with a brief story, an interesting quotation, a provocative question, an analogy, a startling fact, or some other specific content.
2. Background information on the essay's topic—does the writer seem knowledgeable about the paper's topic? For instance, if your peer's essay contains an analysis of a

professional writer's argument, then the opening paragraph should offer a brief summary of that argument (the main and supporting ideas). If your peer focuses on an issue, then the introduction might contain key terms (definitions) or a brief review of pros and cons.

Look for these two introductory elements, but focus most of your first-paragraph time on the thesis, the essay's most important sentence.

Body Paragraphs

Analyze and discuss the supporting paragraphs one at a time, remembering to ask appropriate questions as much as possible. As a tutor, you should be prying answers from your peer, not just giving them to your peer. For instance, after reading the first body paragraph, you could ask, "Is this your topic sentence?" If your peer's body paragraph contains no topic sentence, you need to help him or her to add one because those focusing statements are second in importance to the thesis only. (Note: Even if the person wants just a grammar check, if you fail to see a clear topic sentence—or thesis—then you should point that fact out. Main focuses are too important to neglect.) To get your peer to create a topic sentence, you could ask about the paragraph's topic (take notes). You could point to the thesis, too, and then have your peer connect those two ideas—the thesis and the paragraph's topic. If you must, start the sentence for your peer, using your notepaper. Get your peer to create as short of a topic sentence as possible since a longer one will contain too many nouns, potentially obscuring the paragraph's topic.

After topic sentences, the most important content need will be development—examples and explanations. Usually, examples will be quotations, either from the primary source (an essay or story, for example) or from secondary sources (research). If a body paragraph lacks examples, then you should ask your peer if the teacher requires them for the assignment. If so, suggest places where examples could be inserted and ask about quotations that could be added—e.g., "What quote could you put here?" If the paper's argumentative, then examples could be incidents, facts, or statistics, so discuss those possibilities and places to put them. Without details, most body paragraphs will be unconvincing, so suggest examples. Then discuss explanations because a quotation cannot be left hanging, so to speak. If your peer has not explained a quotation, ask this: "How does this quote prove your point?" Quite often, you can integrate quoted material smoothly into the paragraph by repeating key words from it. Often being connotative, those key words will imply the writer's point, so ask your peer about them—i.e., "What key words imply the writer's point?"

To illustrate your suggestions, you might have to show your peer examples, such as the following:

- Through the word "tragedy," the writer implies that ...
- In other words, this "tragedy" occurred because ...
- The situation's being a "tragedy," authorities must ...

Remember that examples are the best teachers but that you shouldn't write too much. Get your peer to do the writing. Remember as well that if you're confused by any content in your peer's body paragraphs, then the teacher will probably also be confused, so always ask what your peer meant to say. For instance, you might say, "How does this sentence support your topic sentence?" Then wait while your peer rewrites the sentence or passage.

Concluding Paragraphs

Most students have been taught to end their essays by summarizing their main points—i.e., thesis and topic sentences. However, if your peer's last paragraph seems uninspiring, you could offer him or her the following techniques for closing paragraphs:

- **bookending:** going back to the Introduction's hook to provide a coherent beginning/ending—e.g., if the essay began with a question, the Conclusion could contain an answer, or if the paper started with a story, the last paragraph could show the tale's ending.
- **extending:** going beyond the essay's thesis to a broader issue—e.g., if your peer is critiquing an essay about noise pollution, the last paragraph could contain some discussion on that issue in general. For this technique, questions work well since they force readers to think.

Whichever technique your peer uses, you should get him or her to exit gracefully and fairly quickly because long Conclusions will confuse or annoy readers.

Editing a Peer's Essay for Grammatical Needs

When you provide editing help, use the read-aloud method: either you or your peer should read the paper aloud, slowly, sentence by sentence, to hear problems. Oftentimes, your peer will benefit more if he or she does the reading. Remember that you should not write on your peer's paper; use your notepaper to create examples and allow your peer to fix his or her own essay. Good editing focuses on the three C's: conciseness (non-wordiness), coherence (clear flow of ideas), and correctness (lack of grammatical errors).

Look and Listen for Wordiness

Although wordy sentences can be grammatically correct, they are as damaging as errors because wordiness impedes readers' ability to understand the essay's ideas. To find wordy spots, focus mainly on the verbs "is" and "are" (and their past tense brothers, "was" and "were"). Of course, some weak-verb phrasing will be necessary, but most writers rely way too much on these vague verbs. Providing no images to help readers understand ideas, weak verbs often attract other signals of wordiness, such as this example shows: "In the essay, there were many examples of weak verbs that were unnecessary." Note first the two were's, but see as well the prepositional phrases (especially the "of" one) and the "that" word group. If you applied the question "What did what?" then you would create this concise thought: "The essay contained many unnecessary weak verbs." In other words, by creating a clear subject ("the essay" instead of "there") and an active verb ("contained," not "were"), you will have greatly improved the sentence.

Once again, note that questions provide the key to effective tutoring: What did what? Who does what? When you see weak verbs (especially "It is" and "There are" beginnings), ask your peer the appropriate questions to get him or her to unravel the wordiness. Besides weak verbs, look for unnecessary "of" prepositional phrases, such as this one: "The argument of the writer depends too much on emotions." If you point out the wordy prepositional phrase to your peer, you could then ask, "What key word from the phrase could go before the word 'argument'?" That way, your peer fixes the problem; you

just point it out. Point out, too, when you see a word repeated in a sentence because that fact will usually signal wordiness, as it does here:

Writers should not repeat nouns in a sentence, because repeating nouns creates wordiness.

After you point out the repetition, you could point to it and say, “What phrasing could you add instead of ‘repeating nouns’?” If your peer can’t find an answer, you could offer part of the rephrasing, perhaps the word “doing”—*because doing what creates wordiness?* If your peer still can’t get the word, then provide it: “doing so.” However, avoid giving the answer too quickly or too often. Tutoring requires patience.

Check for Sentence Beginnings Problems

Sentences’ first words can signal common problems, so learn to look for certain phrasings. For instance, check “ing” verbal phrase beginnings, such as “By ___ing,” “While ___ing,” or just “ing” to edit for dangling modifiers and mixed constructions:

error: By failing to check for verbal phrase beginnings created errors.

fixed: By failing to check for verbal phrase beginnings, the writer created errors.

error: While editing for common errors, dangling modifiers were missed.

fixed: While editing for common errors, the writer missed dangling modifiers.

fixed: While the writer edited for common errors, dangling modifiers were missed.

Note how the doer of the ing’s action follows the verbal phrases in the fixed sentences. If you see this error in your peer’s paper, point to the “ing” beginning and to the word that follows the phrase (often an “it”) and ask him or her this: “Who does what?” By rephrasing the statement, your peer will fix the dangling modifier.

Checking beginnings will also help both you and your peer to spot comma needs, so look for subordinate word groups and transitions. Check this passage: *Although commas are necessary many writers fail to use them. Like sign posts guiding readers through a sentence commas show how the words should be read. Therefore if a writer uses commas incorrectly or fails to add them readers could be confused.* Quite often, effective comma use signals a strong writer, so most likely your peer will be confused by this mark. Therefore, point out the words that signal the comma need. You might ask the following: “Where does the comma go after this word, ‘Although’? Not right after that word—where within the sentence? Now where should the comma go after the ‘Like’? Now how about the ‘Therefore’ and the ‘if’?” Through such pointing and questioning, your peer will feel that he or she fixed the paper, not someone else.

Sometimes a subordinate word group beginning will lead to a fragment, a non-statement, such as these examples illustrate: *For example, fragments and other grammatical errors. Interrupting the flow of ideas and damaging the writer’s credibility.* The transition “For example” especially tends to signal a fragment, which can either be connected (by comma) to the previous sentence or rephrased. For instance, you might ask your peer, “What does what?”—i.e., *fragments and other grammatical errors interrupt the flow ...*

Much more common than fragments, dropped quotations will appear at the beginnings of sentences. If your peer’s quotation lacks an introduction, then ask, “Who

says?” If the paper contains many disconnected quotations, then ask for a different phrasing, providing examples if necessary: *According to the writer*, *As the writer states*, *In the writer’s words*, etc. Again, try not to give away too much writing; get your peer to guess the phrasing by providing first words, perhaps. Sometimes, though, you will need to offer your peer more than questions; for example, you might explain that a quotation tends to be preceded by a statement/colon, a phrase/comma, or a sentence beginning/no mark, the latter showing that the quotation finished the writer’s statement. If you have to give examples, use your notepaper.

Scanning Sentence Middles for Common Errors

Along with sentence beginnings, the middles of statements often contain common problems. Thus, scan your peer’s sentences for the following phrasings:

- **, however + , this** : A comma before a transition (and sometimes before a pronoun) often signals a run-on—e.g., *The writer read her paper aloud to hear errors, however, she missed run-ons.*
fixed with punctuation: The writer read her paper aloud to hear errors; **however**, she missed run-ons.
fixed with coordination: The writer read her paper aloud to hear errors, **but** she missed run-ons.
fixed with subordination: **Although** the writer read her paper aloud to hear errors, she missed run-ons.
- **, which** : Make sure that a “which” refers to the word (not word group) before it, or else you could create an unclear modifier since readers might not know what the “which” information applies to—e.g., *The word “which” can confuse readers, which will interrupt communication.*
fixed: The word “which” can confuse readers, interrupting communication.
fixed: The word “which” can confuse readers, and this problem will interrupt communication.
- **is when + is because** : These phrases almost always signal an error called faulty predication, so rewrite the sentences by applying the Who/What-does-what question—e.g., *An example of faulty predication is when a writer links a noun to an adverb.*
fixed: For example, faulty predication occurs when a writer links a noun to an adverb.
- **and + , and** : Precede coordination with a comma if the “and” leads to a second statement. Follow the coordination with a repeated word if the “and” connects two parallel word groups.
no comma: Complex sentence types reveal the relationship between two ideas **and** show that one idea is more important than the other.
comma: Complex sentence types reveal the relationship between two ideas, **and** writers use them to show that one idea is more important than the other.
faulty parallelism: Writers must remember that errors interrupt communication and mistakes damage a writer’s credibility.
fixed: Writers must remember that errors interrupt communication **and that** mistakes damage a writer’s credibility.

- **;** (**semicolons**) : These marks should balance two statements, not divide a single sentence. Think of semicolons as “soft periods,” not as hard commas—e.g., *Since semicolons balance two main clauses; they should not be used in complex sentences.*
fixed: Since semicolons balance two main clauses, they . . .
fixed: Semicolons balance two main clauses; they should not . . .
- **:** (**colons**) : While semicolons balance two equal ideas, colons point ahead to information, such as a list, a quotation, or a specific explanation. You would be wise to make a statement before a colon, and as with semicolons, do not divide a thought with a colon (or continue a thought after the information that follows the colon)—e.g., *Colons point ahead to introduce information, such as: quotations, items in a series, and some explanatory statements.*
fixed: Colons point ahead to introduce information: quotations, items in . . .
fixed: Colons point ahead to introduce information, such as quotations, items in . . .
- **they + their + them** : Plural pronouns must refer to plural nouns, such as “people” and “readers,” not to singular nouns, such as “a person” and “a reader,” or to singular pronouns, such as “anyone,” “someone,” etc.—e.g., *Anyone could miss an agreement error if they fail to look for plural pronouns.*
fixed: **Anyone** could miss an agreement error if **he or she** fails to look . . .
fixed: **Writers** could miss an agreement error if **they** fail to look . . .
- **you + I + we + us + our** : Personal pronouns might not be appropriate, especially within body paragraphs, so check to see if your peer’s assignment calls for personal pronouns. For instance, you can use “you” if you are writing to a specific person or if you are giving directions.
inappropriate: *Because of the article’s graphic language, you can feel the writer’s anger, and I think that the powerful emotion is transferred to us.*
more academic: Because of the article’s graphic language, **readers** can feel the writer’s anger, and that powerful emotion is transferred to **them**.

These errors are so common that some probably appear in your own writing (check and see). Just remember not to fix the error; instead, locate it and teach by asking questions, such as “What mark balances two statements? What mark do you use when the ‘and’ leads to a second statement? What general word can you use instead of ‘you’?” Through such questions, learning will thrive. Both you and your peer will feel better about the tutorial.

Smooth out Choppy Sentence Beginnings

Do your peer’s sentences all seem to begin with nouns and pronouns? If too many sentences start with their subjects, then the prose will be choppy--i.e., your peer’s thoughts will continually appear to be starting over and over, chopping up his or her flow of ideas. Like speed bumps, choppy sentence beginnings slow the flow. You will hear choppiness as your peer reads the sentences. When you hear or see two or more fairly short sentences, ask your peer which statement is more important. The less important idea should be subordinated and combined to the more important one. If possible, use an adverb clause (i.e., “because,” “although,” “when,” and/or “if”) or a verbal phrase (“ing”) to combine related sentence pairs:

choppy: Choppy sentence beginnings accent too many nouns and statements. Readers must struggle to follow the writer’s thinking.

smooth: Because choppy sentence beginnings accent too many nouns and statements, readers must struggle to follow the writer's thinking.

choppy: The writer creates three simple sentences in a row. He fails to show readers how the ideas relate. He confuses them.

smooth: Creating three simple sentences in a row, the writer fails to show readers how the ideas relate, confusing them.

Note that the main ideas now stand out—i.e., “readers struggle” and “the writer fails.” You can point out this fact after your peer combines sentences. To get him or her to do that, you could ask, “What ‘b’ word could you use to connect these sentences?” or “How would you ‘ing’ this sentence to combine it with this one since both statements begin with the same subject?” Before long, your peer will respond even as you ask the question, which will have become an editing tool.

Along with smoothing out choppy beginnings, you will help your peer to strengthen coherence by adding transitions to show readers the direction of his or her thoughts. In general, suggest that your peer add a transition every few sentences (too many will seem to throw the audience around!). Here are a few common, helpful pointing words:

In other words, (works well right after a quotation)--shows that you are about to explain an idea in your own words.

In fact, (works well before a thesis or within “e” content: explanation)--shows that you are about to make a strong point.

Therefore, (works well near the end of “e” content)--shows that you are about to finish an idea.

For instance, (works well before a quotation or illustration)--shows that you are about to show a point.

Remember that transitions do not connect grammatically; they just imply the type of content to come. To get your peer to add a transition, you might ask, “What contrasting ‘H’ word could you add here?” or “What ‘Th’ word will show that you’re summing up here?”

Answering Your Peer’s Questions about Citation Formats

Most of your peers will be required to use the MLA (Modern Language Association) format, which as you know focuses on author/page number. Some will need the APA (American Psychological Association) format, which highlights the author and year (and sometimes the page number). A common APA citation will look like this: According to Johnson (2008), . . . If the sentence contains a quotation, then your peer should add the page number in parentheses after it—e.g., (p. 44). If your peer’s assignment requires an unfamiliar format, such as the APA or Chicago (footnotes) ones, then check a handbook to find a quick example. However, to provide answers for harder-to-find information, check the following potential peer/tutor scenarios:

Question: Do I always cite a quotation at the sentence’s ending?

Answer: Cite the quotation before the first punctuation mark after the quotation. For example, note how this sentence continues after the quotation: *Although the experts advise writers to add citations “before the first punctuation mark after the quotation” (Gillespie 10), I always used to do so before the period.*

Question: Do I cite the person's whole name ever? What if two of the sources have the same last name?

Answer: You should mention the source's full name when you first refer to that person in the text, but you never need the full name in parentheses. In the rare event that two sources do have the same last name, add the first letter of the person's first name to the citation--e.g., (E. Booth 49).

Question: What if I have two sources from the same author?

Answer: If this happens, add the source's abbreviated title after the person's last name in the parenthetical citation--e.g., (Booth, "What You" 49).

Question: How do I cite a quote if that person isn't the source's author?

Answer: This common scenario poses no problems. Remember that you cite only the source's author (or the abbreviated title if no author is listed). Thus, when you introduce the quotation, say who says it, but when you cite the information, add the source's last name.

- example: As student Gordon McGee states, "Even simple concepts can get confusing" (Booth 49).

(Note: Some teachers will want you to put "qtd in" before "Booth" in the parenthetical citation, showing that McGee's statement was "quoted in" Booth's source.)

Question: What if I have a quote within a quote? Can I use a semicolon before a quotation? How do I indent quotes?

Answer: For a quote within a quote, use doubles around the whole quotation and single quote marks around the internal quote. As for semicolons before quotations, avoid them, using a colon, comma, or no mark to lead into the information. If the quotation covers more than four lines, indent the material ten spaces (MLA format) and do not use quotation marks (unless they appear in the original passage).

Question: Do I have to cite encyclopedias or dictionaries?

Answer: You do not need to cite dictionaries (just mention the book's name when you introduce the definition/quotation). For background information, encyclopedias can be helpful, but because the material is general and common, you do not need to cite them. However, if you use specialized encyclopedias, do cite them (as always, if no author's listed, cite the abbreviated title and page number). Keep this in mind about encyclopedias: They worked well for high school research papers, but college professors will expect more specific and in-depth research.

Question: Do I have to cite facts and statistics?

Answer: Cite all factual information that is subject to change or difficult to find.

Question: Do I even need quotations? Can't I just paraphrase my research?

Answer: Paraphrasing *will* be required for most college papers, and you will want to paraphrase for two main reasons--to clarify a quotation's meaning and to avoid over-quoting. However, quoting an idea adds an expert who backs your opinion, and a direct quotation tends to exude more authority than a paraphrased idea. In short, use some quotations unless your teacher requests only paraphrasing.

Question: How long of a quotation should I use?

Answer: Do not quote unnecessary information since excess words could steer readers in the wrong direction or obscure what you want them to see. To remove unnecessary information from a quoted passage, use ellipsis (three spaced periods).

Question: How do I space the Works Cited entries?

Answer: For each entry, indent all lines (2nd, 3rd, etc.) but the first, which should be flush with the left-hand margin.

Question: Can I use one quote right after another? Can I start or end body paragraphs with quotations? Can I use quotes to focus my papers?

Answer: Do not use two quotations in a row. Remember that you showed the first quotation for a reason, so you must explain why the quoted information proves your own point. For the same reason, you should usually avoid ending a body paragraph with a quotation, and if you begin a supporting paragraph with someone else's words, readers will be confused about focus--what's the topic sentence? Put all focusing ideas in your own words, too, not in quotations, or else your paper will seem like someone else's.

Other question will no doubt arise, so consult a handbook (or another peer tutor) for help. Remember that learning's often a collaborative process.

Helping English as a Second Language Students

Quite often, you will have the challenge of working with ESL students, who tend to try hard and to care a lot about their writing and learning. Since these students often feel especially vulnerable about their writing skills, you must be supportive and clear with your suggestions. The following guidelines will help you to work effectively with ESL students:

1. Exchange names and find out what the student wants. Often, ESL students will want help just with grammatical concerns.
2. Sit side-by-side or perpendicularly and share the student's paper. With ESL students, many sentences will contain grammatical errors, so you can start editing right away (i.e., without reading the student's paper or part of it first).
3. Have your peer read a sentence aloud and then point out trouble spots. Make your explanations short but clear--and use questions to get your peer to see problems.

Follow this same read aloud/question process for the whole paper.

Often, your questions can be short (e.g., "Preposition?") because ESL students usually know grammatical rules and terminology better than their native English speaking peers. This list covers common problems for ESL students:

- **Prepositions:** Often, your peers will leave out an "of," "in," "on," etc., or use the wrong preposition. If you just say "preposition" and point to the spot, your peer will no doubt go through a list of these words until you say "yes."
- **Articles:** ESL students usually do not have the words "the," "an," or "a" in their native languages, so they will forget to put these little words before some nouns. To show them this error, ask "Article?" and point to the noun. If your peer

chooses the wrong word, say “the pointing one” for *the* or “the general one” for *a* or *an*.

- Plurals: Other languages designate plural nouns differently than ours does, so ESL students commonly leave the “s” off of plural nouns. Just point to the error and suggest “plural.” Often, a corresponding verb will need to be edited, too, to make it agree with the now-plural noun.
- Verb tense: As with plurals, the English language’s verb tense rules will be a problem for ESL students (and often for native speakers, as well). Usually, you just need to ask “past tense?” or “present tense?” and your peer will fix the error.
- Word choice: ESL students are always building their English vocabularies, and this fact leads to some awkward diction choices. Instead of simply giving your peer appropriate words (you will have to do this occasionally), try giving him or her the word’s beginning, such as “Thu” for *thus* or “sug” for *suggests*. By playing this word game, you reinforce that your peer is writing the paper, not you. As always, use your notepaper; don’t write on your peer’s paper.

While other errors will arise, you will see these five most often when you work with ESL students. You will enjoy assisting these peers because they will work hard and will be especially grateful for your help.

Tutoring can be especially rewarding when you do the job well, when you teach rather than fix. Dramatist Harold Pinter once said, “We use words to hide from each other.” In relation to tutoring, Pinter’s warning means this: Don’t give speeches or hog your peer’s paper; instead, share the tutorial and remember that questions line the path to success.