



## Handout: Characteristics of a Good Tutor

### KNOWLEDGE

- **Is well trained** - A tutor begins developing a body of knowledge with his or her initial training. Be engaged in the training. Ask questions, do homework, and reflect on what you're learning in the workshop.
- **Continues to learn** - Tutoring requires a commitment to continuous learning. Take advantage of learning opportunities including workshops and online resources.
- **Talks with staff, tutors, and learners** - One of the best ways to develop your knowledge base is to talk with others who are involved in literacy instruction. Program staff and other tutors are great resources, but so are learners. Learners have good insight into what they need, what works, and why it works.
- **Is inquisitive** - A good tutor is inquisitive. A good tutor is constantly asking "I wonder why..." and then working to find an answer.

### EXPERIENCE

- **Is well prepared** - An experienced tutor knows the importance of being well prepared, and has thought through the details of the lesson, not just the broad strokes.
- **Reflects on lessons** - As a tutor, you should set aside 10-15 minutes at the end of each lesson to reflect on how the lesson went: what worked and didn't work, what was hard or easy for learners, and what questions they had. This reflection will help you turn your experience into knowledge that can be used in future lessons.
- **Asks for learner input** - An experienced tutor recognizes the value of asking for learner input into the design of lessons, and is able to incorporate the learners' ideas.
- **Is ready to be flexible** - Flexibility is a good trait for a tutor, but it doesn't happen magically. Tutors are flexible because they are prepared to be flexible. They have backup plans, alternate activities, and a wealth of experiences to draw from that allow them to adapt effectively.
- **Is OK deviating from lesson plan** - Experienced tutors understand that a class rarely goes according to the lesson plan. Learners want to discuss a topic or practice longer than the tutor had planned or sometimes learners go off topic altogether. An experienced tutor recognizes that taking advantage of a teachable moment is more important than sticking to a lesson plan.

## ATTITUDE

- **Patient** - Learning to read well is a slow process. It can take time to carefully build knowledge before it all comes together for a learner. Allow learners time to think, process, respond, and internalize information.
- **Empathetic** - Try to place yourself in the learner's shoes and imagine how challenging it would be to learn to read as an adult. Remind yourself that the learner is capable in many aspects of living.
- **Creative** - As a tutor, you will likely rely on published materials as the core of your lesson. You will need to be creative in adapting published materials to meet the needs of the learner, and to take learning outside of the textbook. Learning also requires interacting with the same material repeatedly. A creative tutor can make that repetition enjoyable.
- **Humorous** - Laughter often reduces tension and anxiety. A learning session with several moments of laughter will seem like a much shorter time. Be sure that you and learners are laughing together. Avoid sarcasm and certainly avoid laughing at learners.
- **Open-minded** - Working with learners who have different backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses requires tutors to be open-minded. As a tutor, you will need to consider learners' points of view and be able to explain different perspectives in learning and culture without judgment.
- **Enthusiastic** - When a tutor is enthusiastic about teaching, a topic, or the accomplishments of a learner, that enthusiasm rubs off on learners. Your enthusiasm for what is happening in the classroom and encouragement of learners is contagious.
- **Committed** - Learning to read is a long journey. Learners and tutors need to be committed to the process. A tutor demonstrates commitment not just with time, but also with preparation and accountability.