

**ESL Tips Based on *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* by Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth**

**What tutors should aim for in a session with an ESL student (p.29):**

1. Recognize learner's strengths.
2. Provide a friendly and encouraging atmosphere in the writing center.
3. Draw the learners' attention to the target structure they need to learn.
4. Have a conversation with the student to learn what they can do without help.
5. Provide appropriate help at the right time.

**Tips from Chapter 3 "Breaking Ice and Setting Goals" (p.33-41)**

1. Make a plan/establish goals for the session (which we already do).
  - a. How to do this:
    - i. Talk with student to see what they know about the Visor Center.
    - ii. Inquire about the student's assignment and their draft.
      1. "What did you learn from this piece of writing?"
      2. "What do you intend to do in the next draft?"
      3. "What do you like best in the piece of writing?"
      4. "What questions do you have of me?"
    - iii. If you need to, ask more forward questions.
      1. "What was the assignment?"
      2. "What is your central point or main argument?"
      3. "What concerns you, or what do you want me to pay careful attention to?"

***Note: I recommend asking the more forward questions. This will help you can see if their paper is expressing their main idea in a clear way and if what they say their paper is about is actually reflected in the paper.***

- iv. Set goals together. This means taking into account the student's goals (grammar, for example) but also suggesting a few of your own, such as content focus and so forth. This will help shift the session's focus from grammar only to content and other areas.
- v. Make the plan visible to the student such as on the white board or on a piece of paper in front of the student.

***Points to remember (p. 39):***

1. *Stick to the plan but remain flexible. Be open to changes in the goals. Our main goal is to assist the student in the areas in which they need assistance.*
2. *Check off items from the goal list as you progress through your session.*

3. *Explain to the student the value of setting goals and the value of the writing session as a whole. Express how you hope that the session serves as an example for future assignments when it comes to goal setting and outlining.*

#### **Tips from Chapter 4 “Reading an ESL Writer’s Text” (p. 42-50)**

1. “It is generally a good idea to start with a quick reading of the ESL writer’s text, focusing on what the writer is trying to communicate and how the paper is organized. A common practice among tutors is to ask writers to read their draft aloud during the [session]. This strategy is often effective for the NES (Native English-speakers) writers who can use their intuitive sense of grammar and the flow of English to assess their own writing. This strategy may not work well for some ESL writers who have not developed that intuitive sense of the English language. For many ESL writers, reading their paper aloud may shift their attention to the pronunciation of the English language—an aspect of language proficiency separate from writing in English” (p. 47).
2. “It may be more helpful for the ESL writer to hear the tutor read the paper out loud—to note when the reader stumbles, pauses, fills in missing articles and modifiers, or reads smoothly” (p. 47).

#### **Tips from Chapter 7 “Looking at the Whole Text” (p. 78-90)**

1. Approach making suggestions with sensitivity and respect. You can do this using some of the following ideas:
  - a. Share your own ideas.
  - b. Point out places where an essay suggests connections to your own life or experiences.
  - c. Pick out the ideas that make you think—or make you think differently.
  - d. Point out the places that are unclear to you; ask the writer to expand her ideas by providing examples or anecdotes that help clarify their thoughts to you.
  - e. Play the devil’s advocate—help the writer see other sides to their ideas.
  - f. Point out places where the student can strengthen their argument or where they can add in counterarguments to help strengthen their paper.

\*all taken from p. 85 of the *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors* by Shanti Bruce and Ben Rafoth

### ***What We Can Do as Tutors***

As tutors, we encounter ESL students who are at various levels of speaking and understanding the English language. Because of these variations, it is important that we as tutors are open to adjusting the goals of the session as the session progresses.

1. Discuss with the student their cultural background with learning English.
  - a. What's your first language?
  - b. How long have you been studying English?
  - c. What do you find difficult about learning the English language?
2. Ask the student whether they feel comfortable enough to read their paper out loud.
  - a. If so, have them read the first paragraph. ***Our goal is that they can critique their own content and not be swayed by the struggle of reading English.*** Some students struggle with reading English to the point where they focus more on grammar rather than content. In other words, they focus more on their pronunciations of the sentences rather than the meaning of what they said. If you notice this happening as your student reads their first paragraph, it is probably best that you read the paper from there on out. This will help them hear how their paper should sound, and it will help them judge the content of what they have written and if the content makes sense. While editing a paper involves reading the paper, we here at the Writing Center want to focus more on the content of the paper rather than how well the student can read English.
  - b. If not confident on reading English, read it out loud to them. As the ESL guide mentioned, sometimes students lose confidence in their writing when they struggle with reading English aloud. We want to encourage a comfortable tutoring atmosphere for the student.