

J2

Questions to Ask Tutors

As the parent of a child with learning or attention problems, you've probably become an expert at motivating, organizing, guiding, back-patting, and just generally being available to help your child manage the daily challenges of school and life. Kids with learning and attention issues often need repeated instruction and extra practice — beyond what school and a reasonable amount of homework time can provide — to master academic content and skills. They usually require more time than other kids to organize and complete their school assignments, as well. As a result, no matter how dedicated you are to supporting your child, there are bound to be times when your schedule, your patience, or your skills just don't allow you to provide all the help your child needs. Before you or your child reach "overload," consider hiring a tutor.

Individuals grouped under the generic label of "tutor" have very different levels of training, skills, and experience. Before you search for someone to help your child, you will want to figure out very specifically and concretely both what you expect this person to help your child accomplish, and what your child's current strengths and challenges are. That will determine the kind of tutor you'll look for. For example, if your child with a language-based learning disability (LD) needs to master writing an organized, coherent paragraph, you may need to hire a tutor with skills in both writing instruction and in remedial work with kids with LD.

Before you contact a tutor, ask yourself such questions as:

- What do I expect this person to do — help my child complete homework, build skills, provide enrichment, teach learning strategies, improve her grades?
- What information about my child — as a learner and as a person — would be useful to a tutor? What are her strengths and accomplishments, and what are her challenges? What personality and temperament traits do we need to take into account in a tutoring situation?
- How will the work with a tutor relate to my child's school program?

What Kind of Tutor Can Provide the Help My Child Needs?

Type of Tutor	Skills They Bring	How They Can Help
High school and college students	Patience, warmth, interest in children, ability to encourage kids to plan, start, and finish a task.	Can give you a break by helping your child with homework, listening to her read, taking her to the library to do research, and other activities.
Retired adults		
Next door neighbor		

Credentialed teachers	Trained in specific content areas of the general education curriculum.	Can help your child improve her knowledge and skills in a particular academic subject, such as math, science, or writing.
Credentialed special education teachers	Specifically trained to work with kids with learning disabilities, and to implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for kids in public schools.	Can assess learning strengths and weaknesses, teach academic skills and strategies, and help identify classroom accommodations to support your child's learning; may work with school staff.
Members of the Association of Educational Therapists (There are professional organizations of educational therapists in 38 states.)	Different levels and types of education, training, and supervised clinical hours are required for various types of educational therapy certification.	Can assess learning strengths and weaknesses, teach academic skills and strategies, help identify classroom accommodations, and work with staff at your child's school.

Tutors are also employed by commercial programs that offer reading instruction, academic skill building, test preparation, and other services. Many commercial programs do not specifically address the special needs of children with learning disabilities or attention problems. Before signing up for such services, ask for information about staff credentials, training, and experience, and decide whether they are a good match for your child's needs. Don't be afraid to ask specifically if the staff person who would be assigned to your child is trained to work with children with learning disabilities or attention problems.

One of the best ways to find a tutor who's a good match for your child is to ask for recommendations from school staff and parents you know. Just as important as credentials is the tutor's ability to

establish a good rapport with your child and family. To help you collect and organize information about the tutors you contact, you may want to use our "[Questions to Ask Tutors](#)" worksheet. It may take some time, but the effort you invest in finding a tutor is likely to benefit your child's learning, as well as reduce family stress.

While SchwabLearning.org is pleased to present information and resources, it is our policy not to recommend or endorse any one specific individual, product, organization, or website. Because parents know their child best, they are the ones who determine the appropriateness of a school or provider based on a match of their child's needs, their own preferences, and the program or services offered. These questions are intended only as guidelines in the decision-making process.

© 2000, 2003 Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation Created: 11/20/2000 Modified: 09/22/2003



About the Contributors

Linda Broatch, Writer/Editor, has an M.A. in Education, with a focus in Child Development, personal experience in supporting those who have learning difficulties, and has worked for many years in nonprofit organizations that serve the health and education needs of children.



Questions to Ask a Tutor Worksheet

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

(Select the questions appropriate for the type of tutor you interview.)

Questions	Notes
What credentials, certifications, and/or degrees do you hold?	
What other specialized training have you received?	
Do you have training and/or experience in working with kids with learning disabilities or attention problems? If so, how do you remain current in the field of learning disabilities or attention problems?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
If you have teaching experience, what subjects did you teach and at what grade level?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO From: To:
What is your experience working with students my child's age?	
How do you deal with motivation, behavior, and/or attention problems?	
What services do you provide?	Tutoring Assessment Parent Conferencing Attendance at School Meetings Other



Questions to Ask a Tutor Worksheet

Questions	Notes
What are your fees?	\$
How long is each tutoring session?	
How frequently do you recommend meeting?	
Do you offer individual or small group instruction?	
Are you willing to coordinate instruction with my child's teachers?	
Are you willing to attend an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
How will I be informed of my child's progress?	
Do you have clients who might be willing to contact us to share their experiences working with you?	

This worksheet offers **suggested** questions to ask when interviewing a tutor. Parents are in the best position to decide which questions are appropriate for their own family and circumstances. Please delete, revise, or add questions to make the worksheet most suitable for your needs.