The best way to begin a tutoring relationship is to create clear rules, procedures, and expectations. In the classroom, it will be important to create an environment that shows you are the tutor (adult in charge) and will show professional distance. Feel free to share stories that students can relate to, but keep personal matters private. Boundaries should be set for the students as well as tutors. Teachers and students should have an understanding that while the teacher is friendly, their main goal is not to be their friend.

Along with this, it is important for students and tutors to have relationships. One effective way to do this is to make sure students know when it is time to be serious and when it is time to have fun. Anytime the school is having a fun activity, it is important for students to see tutors having a fun time too; this is keeping their professionalism and rapport with students.

It is important for tutors to convey their dedication to each student's success. For a student to connect with a tutor, they must feel comfortable, safe, and connected. A student must feel like a tutor genuinely cares about their well-being, and it is then that the student will begin to respect the tutor for their commitment to education. The key to making a relationship work is to base it on honesty, sincerity, and caring.

Kids know if you care, they know if you're insincere.

- Allow your students to start each day fresh. Never, ever hold grudges. Even if they were horrible and uninterested the day before, let them know that today, this day, is a new start.

- You don’t have to be outgoing, but you should always be warm and kind. Smile.

- Know that your students are not frustrated with you; they are frustrated with the fact that they don't read and write as well as their peers. They have seen their classmates take and pass a test that they cannot. They have spent years feeling behind. They will not be excited or grateful to be enrolled in a required tutoring program. Acknowledging these things makes your job a whole lot easier.

- Focus on the positives: a student shows up on time? Fantastic! A student who never turns in any work finally does something? Wonderful! Give genuine, sincere, and frequent praise. Create opportunities for success. If you know that a student will be unable or unwilling to write an entire essay, then, do not assign an entire essay. Instead, show the student how to create an outline, and then give them ten minutes to recreate the outline using a different question prompt. Voila! Opportunity for success created.

- The students you are working with may struggle to follow directions. Make sure you are always clear about what you want a student to complete or do. If possible, use more than one method of delivery (e.g. write the instructions on the board, tell the students as a group, and then reinforce the guidelines by individually asking students to talk about the assignment).

- Remember that your students are people with lives and problems. Sometimes they will feel as though their problems are insurmountable. The problems they bring to tutoring may be something as small as an unreturned text. It could be something as big as finding out that their younger sister is being sexually abused by their mother's boyfriend. Both problems may manifest themselves in the same way: not showing up / showing up, putting head on desk / showing up, acting out. You can't solve these problems. What you can do is create a healthy working atmosphere that respects and acknowledges the stressors that your students are experiencing. Saying something like, "Wow, I'm so sorry - it seems like you've had a rough day," can go a long way when it comes to building relationships and getting students back on task.
- Start each session by asking some variation of this, "How are you? Tell me about your day." Then, really listen to the answers. Ask follow-up questions. Take a vested interest in learning about your students. If a student tells you that she has to babysit for her little brother when she gets home from school, remember to ask her about her brother the next time that you meet with her.

- This one seems little, but it really matters: always spell and pronounce your students' names correctly.

- Don't take anything personal, and, when the tension gets high for some reason, it's OK to say "I need to think about this." before you respond to a behavior or statement, and allow them the same space if they need it.

- Bring positive energy to each tutoring session. Your students, whether they realize it or not, will eventually begin to mirror your tone. If you are low-key and uninterested, they will be low-key and uninterested. If you are positive about learning, positive about the upcoming tests and positive about their progress, they will, on some level, begin to adopt your way of thinking.

- Set consistent, achievable expectations. Let your students know that you believe that they can be successful. Be understanding, but hold students accountable. Great tutoring is about balance.

- Make sure that you get support if you are feeling overwhelmed. You're not alone.