

Getting Started with Remote Tutoring

A Guide from Literacy Rochester

Remote tutoring during the COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge that we are all figuring out together! We have compiled advice from our staff and tutors on approaching remote tutoring. If you have any questions or if you're interested in being matched with a student for remote tutoring, please reach out to Xeno at xenocarpenter-new@literacyrochester.org and Ritti at rsingh@literacyrochester.org.

1: Set expectations with your student

Every student is different, so work with your student to find a system and schedule that works for the two of you! You might meet over video calling software, you might check in over the phone, and you might be sending worksheets back and forth.

Try to maintain a consistent schedule as much as possible. It may help to work off of the schedule you already had prior to the pandemic. Keep in mind that it may be harder to stay focused when meeting remotely. You may want to conduct shorter lessons or meet more often.

If you are going to be using video calls in your meetings, make sure that both you and your student have spaces to meet that are as distraction-free as possible. Be sure to remove anything from your background that you would not want your student to see.

Some tools for communicating remotely include:

- Zoom
- Facebook Messenger
- Phone calls
- WhatsApp (many ESL students already use WhatsApp)
- Skype
- Google Hangouts and Google Meet
- Google Classroom Suite
- Facetime

You may need to teach your student how to utilize some of these technologies for remote tutoring. You may also need some assistance yourself! Please feel free to reach out to the Literacy Rochester staff or try out our [Digital Literacy's chat](#), where volunteers are available to help out with technical issues.

2: Lesson Planning

Your lesson plans are probably going to take a different shape than they used to. Our tutors recommend continuing to lesson plan, but also be prepared be flexible with your plans.

Check in with your student to see what their goals are, especially if you are resuming tutoring after a break. You and your student may have different goals now; for some students, it may be enough just to get in some conversation practice. Other students may want to focus on grammar or math skills.

Our tutors shared the following ideas for remote lessons:

- Utilize more digital resources, such as online worksheets and videos.
- If you and your student get curious about a topic you are discussing during your lesson, have your student research that topic during the meeting, using their computer or phone. Then, have a conversation about what they found out.
- For ESL students, have your student give you a tour of their house in English using video calling software. It's a great way to practice grammar, vocabulary, storytelling, and more.
- Ask your student to watch a movie on Netflix or on other streaming services, and then follow up with your student as if it was a reading assignment. You can assign a writing prompt based on the film or simply discuss the film together.
- Try contextually relevant lesson plans: practice calling the doctor or ordering takeout with your student.

We recommend using some of the following tools:

- News for You (password: OEEA76)
- White boards, papers, and markers that you and your student can hold up to the screen.
- ESL worksheets and YouTube videos
- Quizlet, which has Flashcards for both Best Plus and TABE
- Books
- Wikipedia

We will keep you updated on when and how our library at Literacy Rochester will reopen so that you can borrow materials from us safely.

3: Stay focused and motivated

Distance learning may be especially difficult for you and your student. Some of our tutors identified the following challenges:

- Losing the physical awareness of the person.
- Lose some spontaneity; instead of running to the board or going on a trip, you must stick to online resources.
- Less variety in activities.
- Technical challenges.
- Screen fatigue.
- Interest level declines when working together online.
- Difficulty sitting still for extended periods.

To stay focused and motivated, we recommend breaking up your tasks (perhaps no more than 8 minutes on a given activity), taking breaks during your meeting to get up and stretch, focusing less on lecturing and more on conversational learning, and checking in regularly with yourself and your student.

You and your students may not make the same kind of progress that you did in the past – but that’s okay! Remote tutoring is challenging for everyone, so make to adjust your goals. Be sure to celebrate the victories, no matter how small.

4: Take advantage of the outdoors

You and your student may be interested in finding ways to meet in person. Meeting outside may be a way to meet safely, so long as you are maintaining 6 feet of distance between you and wearing masks. Check in with yourself and your student regarding what you are comfortable with.

We recommend meeting up at parks, going on walks, and finding outdoor museums. You may be able to find park benches or picnic tables that allow you to maintain sufficient distance. You can practice reading signs and having conversations about nature.

5: Report back

Literacy Rochester is still tracking tutor hours, but we are doing it a little differently! If you are working with your student remotely, make sure that you let Xenia, Ritti, and Jen know. We will reach out to you each month to check in.