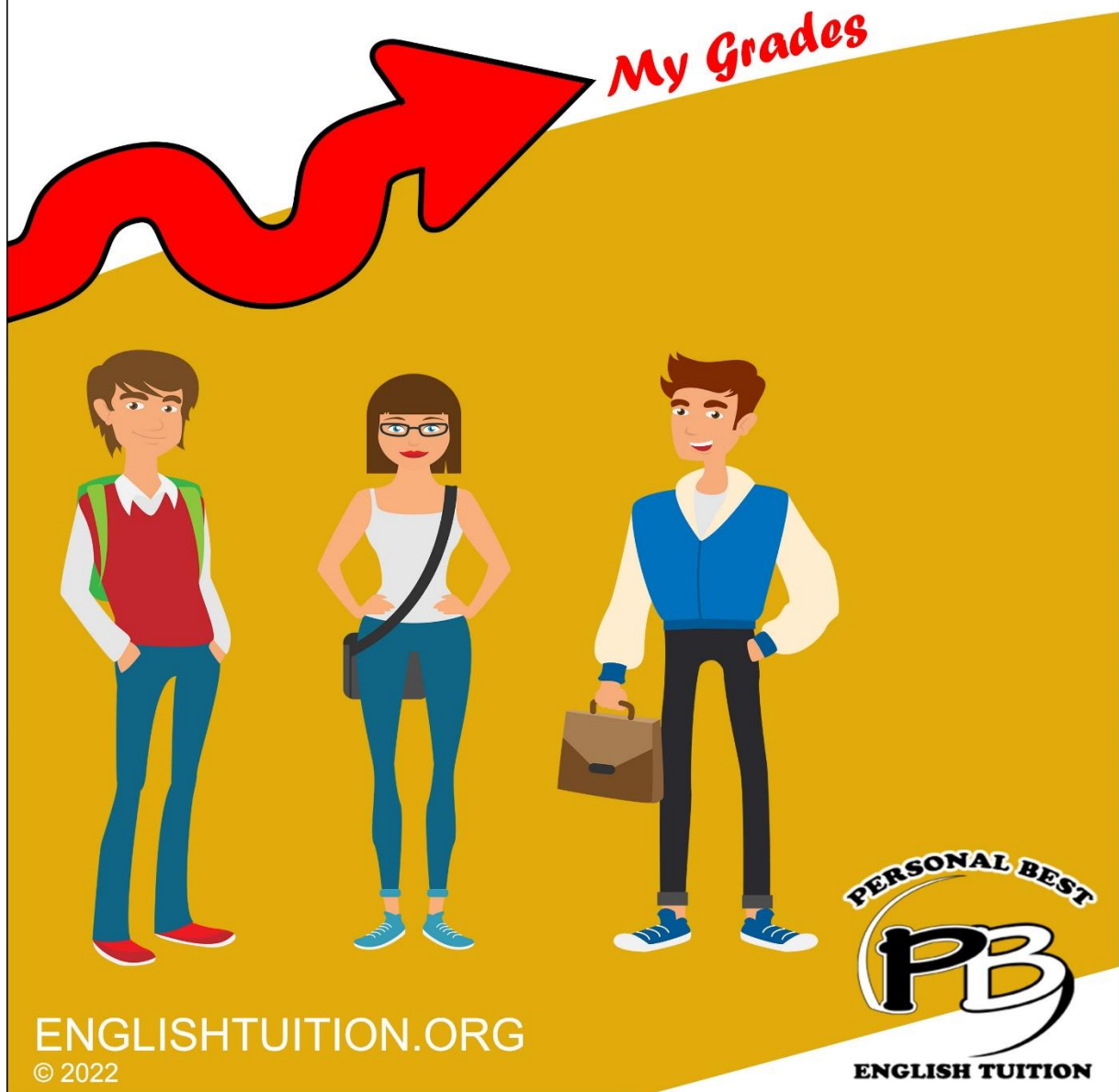


How to Get the Most Out of Your Tuition Arrangements: A Parent's Guide

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Hi,

I am Mr. Chow, a private tutor specializing in providing English tuition services. I have been teaching for about 8 years at the time of writing this guide. At first, I wanted to write a comprehensive guide (kind of like a manifesto) and share my experiences and insights. However, in this day and age, who has the time to read a lengthy guide book? I think you get to save more time and get more value out of a quick but concise guide that offers you nothing but the most valuable information. So, without further ado, here is how to get the most out of all your tuition arrangements.

1.0 Selecting the group size: 1 to 1, small group or big group?

Over the years, I have found small group tuition (3 to 6) to be the most effective. Some parents prefer 1 to 1 tuition because they want their children to have undivided attention. The problem with this arrangement is that if the child refuses to learn for some reason, then the entire session is wasted on that one single child. What if the child decides to throw tantrums or simply does not want to pay attention? Nothing would be accomplished then.

Of course, 1 to 1 tuition does have some benefits. Parents can ask for highly customized lessons and enjoy flexible timings. They can change timings because they don't need to worry about affecting other students. Even then, such benefits can become disadvantages. Frequent cancellations or ad-hoc changes to lessons may signal a lack of commitment from the student and the inconsistency may affect the child's learning. A highly customized lessons may also mean that the child is kept in his or her comfort zone

and may not be motivated to keep up with peers. For these reasons, I do not recommend 1 to 1 arrangement.

For bigger groups (12 or more), fees may be more affordable. However, attention tends to be diluted and at times, students may 'hide' during lessons and hope that the tutor does not call him out when he is not paying attention. Engagement is also sacrificed since there are so many students. Giving a chance to all the students to have a go at oral delivery (10 mins for each student) would mean sacrificing precious lesson time. Feedback would also be less in-depth since there are so many students in the group. For other subjects, a large group may be possible as teachers do not need to go through the work of every student. They simply need to go through the answers with the students. As I teach English, this is not possible. Work like essays or summaries require the tutor to mark and this takes time.

For the above reasons, I highly recommend small group tuition. My groups have a maximum of only 3 students. I believe small groups strike the right balance. If a student doesn't want to learn in the group, the tutor can be patient and work with the other students first and then come back later. The tutor can also provide in-depth feedback that will benefit all the students in the group.

2.0 The Role of Parents

In general, there are **3 types of parents**:

2.1 Parents who know a little about the subject and takes an active interest in the child's progress.

These are ideal parents to work with. Speaking from experience, the child is happiest and learn the fastest when the parents are involved. Some parents believe that asking about results stresses the children out. On the contrary, when done with tact, I observe that it has the opposite effect. The child wants to know that the parents care. So, parents who ask out of concern (instead of nagging all the time) and actually look through the work out the students typically end up reaping rewards. The child may resist at first (perhaps afraid of a little scolding) but in the long run, the child can feel and understand the deep love and concern stemming from the parents' actions. This motivates them to do better in their studies. In the later part of this guide, I will share some tips on what parents can do to assist their children.

2.2 Parents who know nothing about the subject but still takes an active interest in the child's progress.

The majority of the parents that I work with fall within this category. They want their children to do well but they know very little about the subject. Since they cannot help their children, they send them for tuition. However, since they lack knowledge about the subject, they face limitations when it comes to helping their children. For example, even if they review their children's work, they are unable to pinpoint the problematic areas. Still, having some involvement is better than having no involvement at all. Parents can still do lots of things to show that they care. Again, more about this later.

2.3 Parents who know nothing about the subject and does not take an interest in the child's progress.

Usually, progress is the slowest when parents know little about the subject and generally adopt a hands-off approach. Note that this doesn't always mean the child will not do well. Some of my students are motivated to learn but they just lack guidance. Their parents are too busy with work. Hence, they send their kids to me for lessons. As these children are self-motivated, they do well with some support and guidance. However, progress is minimal when the child is not motivated at all. To make things worse, their parents are too busy to track their progress. Some parents simply look at the examination results. This is understandable because they don't get much insights since they have little knowledge about the subject. The problem with this approach is that parents are unable to identify the reasons why the child is not making much progress.

Usually, they just arrive at the conclusion that the tuition arrangement is not working out and opt to switch tuition services. Some of my students can change up to 5 or 6 tutors within 4 years of secondary education. This is hardly healthy. Upon investigation, I find that it is usually not the tutor's fault. The child usually ends up getting the same grade with little or no improvement.

Hence, I highly recommend that parents show more care and concern for their children even if they possess very little knowledge about the subjects.

That leads us to the final part of this guide. I told you it's going to be short 😊

3.0 Things that parents should do to support their children

3.1 Ensuring that homework is done. – Most students don't like additional homework and some tutors do not dish out homework. My opinion is that regardless of the subject, homework allows the student to get more practice and become better at the subject. It helps to reinforce the teaching and accelerate their learning. I have some standard weekly homework that I require all my students to do so that their grammar do not become rusty and they continue to build up their vocabulary. If they don't do the homework consistently, they usually forget the teaching in a few weeks' time. I know because when I conduct revision with them before exams, I find that they have forgotten the basics! When ensuring homework is done, don't just take the child's word for it. Literally check the work to make sure that it is done properly. If the child simply fills in the blanks to prevent some nagging, then it defeats the purpose. Ultimately, we want the child to learn something from the homework. More importantly, we want the child to develop the correct attitude towards homework. They must learn why homework is important and learn to take homework seriously.

3.2 Engaging the child in other homebased learning activities – There are things that students can do at home to enhance their learning. For example, students can borrow books from the library and read more. They can also watch documentaries on TV or online to build up their knowledge. Having meaningful conversations at home about current affairs will most certainly help a child to improve his oral skills. I tell my students that they should not expect the tuition lessons to be magic pills that will somehow turn them into masters of language or eloquent speakers. Each lesson lasts 1.5 to 2 hours and most of the time, I'm the one doing the writing and talking as I'm teaching. So, it's not reasonable to expect a child to improve his language skills with just 2 hours exposure to the language weekly right? Therefore, it makes a ton of sense for children to be involved in some forms of homebased learning in order to accelerate their learning. When the students come for lessons, I will then do my job to check if they have been learning outside of lessons. Their work will reveal everything.

3.3 Acquiring feedback from tutors – I provide feedback to parents every 3 to 6 months. Some parents don't even ask for feedback because they can gauge the progress of their children from their homework and from examination results. I do, however, encourage parents to seek feedback every 3 to 6 months just to ensure that all parties are on the same page. For instance, there is parent who

usually messages me after mid-year or end-of-year exams to review the exam papers and to see what has gone wrong. We then identify areas of improvement and focus on those areas together. The child knows where we are going and accepts the teaching more readily.

3.4 Reinforcing positive habits at home – Positive habits such as sleeping early, finishing homework first before playing mobile games, regular exercise, eating well, etc. have a great impact on a child's learning. At times, I am forced to investigate why a child is consistently late for lessons or not completing homework. Usually, it has something to do with unhealthy habits. Unfortunately, such habits affect a child's learning. Parents can their children to form good habits so that they can concentrate better and learn more during lessons.

I believe the suggestions above have the most impact on your child's learning. Note that there are also a few things that I think parents should not do.

4.0 Things that parents should NOT do

- Both tutors and parents should not undermine each other's authority. They need to work together to get the best results. Disagreements are inevitable but mutual respect should be observed at all times.
- Become defensive when receiving feedback from teachers or tutors. Feedback is meant to be constructive and aid in a child's growth. Don't take it personal!
- Forget about paying the tutor despite numerous reminders. No one likes to work for a boss who forgets to pay salaries.

5.0 Conclusion

As you can see, learning can take place anywhere. Experiences can be both recreational and educational. Trips to the libraries can be stress beaters. Watching documentaries as a family can help strengthen bonds. In sum, I think we are all in agreement that children grow up fast! Hence, we should appreciate the time that we get to spend with them on their learning journeys while they are young.

I hope this guide is of use to you in some way. If you feel your child needs some extra help in his or her studies, don't hesitate to reach out. I'm sure there are some capable tutors around your area.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Chow

CEO, CFO, COO, Founder, Co-founder, Principal English tutor, HOD, etc.

(I get to enjoy ALL the titles since it's just me 😊)

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