



# FIND A TUTOR

*In the Portland area*





*Tutor Portland Founder, Eric Earle*

## THANKS FOR CHOOSING TO DOWNLOAD MY GUIDE!

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As you know, I'm Eric Earle.

I've been studying, researching, and living tutoring and education right here in the Portland area for the past 5 years.

Over that time six core facts have stood out about how to set students- your teen- up for academic success and personal excellence through personal tutoring.

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## HERE ARE THE SIX BIG IDEAS:

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# 1.

### **How you start your search matters**

In this section I share with you seven things that I have personally noticed can set parents back before they even get started. This is about shifting your attitudes and perceptions about tutoring and how student / tutor relationships succeed and prosper.

# 2.

### **Forget about Craigslist**

There are simply too many strange applicants and users on this website, not to mention sifting through all of them is a bear in and of itself. The risks are too high. I don't even recommend collecting resumes that don't come through a pool of pre-approved pools of applicants. I will share with you an incredible pool I have found that is free to access.

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# 3.

## Do an interview

It might sound crazy, but there are parents out there who just hire a tutor based on resume. The interview is an incredibly important step. This is the time where you should get a sense of the person that will be working with your student. Any red flags will pop up here. The prospective tutor should be able to convey a narrative that fits with her resume and cover letter. Your questions here should be asked in order to uncover the applicant's strengths and the subject they are most passionate about. The tutor who is passionate about Math might be able to help your student with English basics, but not half as well as they will help your student in math. Consider having a separate tutor for each subject.

# 4.

## The story is more important than the resume

The tutor has to be there for more than just a paycheck. The story about what has led the tutor to this role should emerge clearly. Tutoring needs to be part of their broader life plan, not simply a source of income. We need to be certain that they are passionate about education and the process of personalized tutoring. When tutors are passionate about teaching and learning, students tend to do better.

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# 5.

## **Focus on fit: making the most of your free session**

First off, should tutors provide a free trial or session? Heck yes! You are investing so much time and energy looking for a tutor. It's always been my belief that tutors need to have some skin in the game. They need to look at each client as a partner whose education and future they are invested in. Free trial sessions ensure that tutors care about your child's success like you do.

# 6.

## **The key is high volume**

Not every applicant will be a good tutor. And only a few will ever be great. You need to interview at least 3-4 tutors (per subject) before you even begin selecting the right tutor for your child. Since selecting the best tutors is a big part of my job, and since the stakes have never been higher than they are today, I keep interviewing and searching until I find the best.

I hope you find the information in this booklet helpful. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns you may have.

Enthusiastically,  
Eric

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## STARTING THE SEARCH: SEVEN BIG DON'TS

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These are the 7 big don'ts to think about before you even start your tutoring process. Jumping into things without having a framework of decision making and a solid plan of attack, is always a bad idea. These are 7 tips to think about to make sure that when you start your search for the perfect tutor, you don't initially head in the wrong direction.

### 1. Don't think of it like you're just hiring a worker

This is a relationship that you and your child will develop with an educator, potentially, for years to come.

### 2. Don't obsess over qualifications

A tutor's education matters a great deal. It's incredibly important to read laboriously and painstakingly through their college transcripts, cover letter, and resumes. Yet, at the same time, you can't let these qualifications cloud out the true crystallizing beauty of the applicant. An applicant's passion must shine through.

### 3. Don't go for quantity of applicants, until you find the best sources

Initially, finding the best sources is one-hundred times more important than simply finding the best applicants. Sources are a highly-prized secret that I've discovered and clarified for tutoring, because they save time! They maximize the efforts of your search before you even begin.

### 4. Don't go through a family friend

Everyone has a suggestion for you. But the problem is, they are not a recruiting service. You might ask for a tutor and they know someone who needs a job. Then you get stuck with a tutor, and it's hard to get out because they are a friend of a friend.

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## 5. Don't think only about years of experience

There are a lot of mediocre tutors who have 1 or 2 years of experience. I've found that some of the best tutors have only tutored a handful of people before. Often, the best tutors tell me they've had practice and experience tutoring and their friends and just helping them get better and pass classes. The best tutors always tell me that they weren't the smartest kids in their classes, but they simply decided that nobody else would outwork them.

## 6. Don't get locked into a long-term contract

Don't sign a long-term tutoring contract. I hear about this all the time. Parents call me asking to get out of these strict contracts, when the tutor stops showing up or the company won't help them. Think about each month as a building block to your child's success. Focus on finding a great tutor for this month and developing a relationship with them as both the student, the tutor and the family grow together over the months and years.

## 7. Don't think one-size-fits-all

One single tutor is not the answer to all of your problems. Think more in terms of a support system. Students change. And so do the subjects they are studying. One tutor is never going to be able to handle every subject as a student grows and progresses through school.

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## TO POST A WANTED AD, OR RESPOND?

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First, you want to find the best sources. Once you have found a good stream of potential applicants, you should write an ad. I have found that it is always better to write ads than respond to them. When you make potential tutors respond to your ad, it shows some initiative on their part.

During an ad you can set out the exact qualifications that you are looking for. This helps you avoid wasting your time, by ensuring that applicants meet the minimum standards that you require:

- A potential tutor needs to have reliable transportation and a flexible schedule
- Have a degree in the subject they are tutoring or have studied it (or currently are studying it) extensively in college
- They need to prove that, for them, tutoring makes sense more than just being a college job

These standards help you save time. You can generally find out, through parameters set out in your “wanted ad,” if a prospective tutor matches your minimum set of qualifications.

From here, you can move to the resume and cover letter process. When done properly, this can be quite extensive and consume a lot of time. Use my tips to save over 4 hours!

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## SAVE FOUR HOURS: QUICKLY ANALYZE COVER LETTERS AND RESUMES

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If you've done the previous steps right—following Eric's don'ts, and setting up a pre-approved source and ad—you should be receiving a lot of resumes and cover letters. Sifting through these can take massive amounts of time. In the early years, when I first started hiring tutors, reading cover letters and resumes would take me over 15 hours per week. Now, I've found that there are some secrets you can look for to cut this time in half (sometimes more!).

Resumes and cover letters should tell a coherent story. You can look for this in the progression of jobs and achievements listed on a resume. You should pay particular attention to a few key areas:

1. *Why do they want to be a tutor? (scan the first and final lines of their cover letter for clues)*

There is really one big thing you can get from the cover letter that you can't get from skimming a resume. This is an idea of the person's story. Specifically, what is driving him or her to seek this tutoring position? Look for a strong and compelling reason here.

2. *Look at their progression of jobs (is education a central focus?)*

Ideally, the progression of jobs should show that education and the topic of interest are both important touchstones of the individual's life. Trust me, you want someone who is passionate about teaching in general and about the subject specifically. If this person has an employment history that is all over the place, or even if they seem to be moving away from education or from the field of interest, discard this resume and keep searching.

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### 3. Where is education listed on their resume? (it should be upfront)

How a person titles the elements on their resume is a reflection of their values. If the applicant is lacking an education header on their resume, this is a big clue they might not be a good fit for a tutoring job. If “education” is listed towards the end of their resume, that might reflect their values. Education and work experience should be front and center.

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## NINE QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING ANY INTERVIEW

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The interview is a tough 45-60 minutes. You have to quickly uncover why the applicant wants to be a tutor as well as the qualities, attributes, and qualifications that will make them right for your student. I have developed a bulletproof set of questions, tested and honed over years of interviews, that I have clearly laid below. These are the nine core questions to make the most of the interview.

### 1. What's your background?

The first and foremost important question is to ask the applicant about their background. Here you are listening for: their interests, passions, and key details that might signal to you later the true genuineness of their resume and life story.

### 2. What's your educational experience?

It's important to know everything you can about a tutor's educational experience. What kind of marks did they receive? Did they have favorite classes or courses they found more challenging? Ask them about what they did to overcome obstacles and hard classes. What did they do when teachers weren't helpful and forthcoming with their time? Find out their philosophy of education. Try to understand their beliefs around learning and teaching.

### 3. What's your work experience?

The fact of the matter is, is that for any position, you want to know what jobs your potential applicant has previously worked. These jobs don't have to be perfect. They just need to make sense. Some jobs help us pay for school—or they help us pay for rent and food while we study for the GRE. Tutoring shouldn't only be that. Tutors need to have a sense of the impact they can have. They should understand and value education and work ethic.

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#### 4. What's your tutoring experience?

When hiring a tutor, it is always fundamentally important to know of any and all tutoring experience an applicant might have. But tutoring experience isn't everything. Sometimes the best tutors don't have any formal, paid tutoring experience—they just did it because they loved it. They tutored their friends in algebra and helped them pass. Be willing to look at tutoring experience beyond resume level work. This is also the area where you can look to make a deal, if it feels appropriate.

#### 5. What courses are you currently taking in school? (or what were your favorite courses as an undergrad?)

It's important to ask about an applicant's resume. You want to know what classes they've taken—and how they did. I'd recommend that, at minimum, you ask to see a copy of their transcript. This way you can ensure they received high marks in the classes they want to tutor your child in. You can also discover what tutors enjoyed and what frustrated them. Sometimes the best tutors I've found were ones where the subject didn't come naturally to them, because they were curious about the subject and enjoyed the challenge of learning.

#### 6. What are your future goals? (beyond tutoring)

Always ask this question. You want to ensure that the applicant has a reasonable story that relates what they've done in the past, and what they are doing now, with what they want to do in their future. Tutoring has to be a logical piece to that puzzle.

#### 7. Why do you want to be a tutor?

This is a question that has hopefully been answered by now. The applicant's artful cover letter, diligently prepared resume, and interviewing communication style have all been presented. You should be developing a sense already of why they want to teach. This question gives them a formal chance to answer.

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## 8. What are your interests?

This is helpful to ask so that you can see if the tutor would be a good fit, personality and rapport wise, with your child. Do they have the same interests? Relatable hobbies?

## 9. What can you teach me right now?

Yes, have them show you their skills on the spot! One thing I've done for years—that has worked beautifully, and is likely responsible for more A's than any suggestion on this page—is to have the tutor teach you a few things, first. Conduct a mock interview session with the tutor. Ask them to teach you a topic within the subject you want. If your child needs to learn Algebra, have them teach you factoring. Play dumb. Make sure they can teach you the same subtopic in multiple different ways. This is important because not everyone learns the same way.

Not every tutor will have the same personality, nor should they. Each student needs something a bit different. Know your child - if they respond well to a high-energy, super-passionate type, then be on the lookout for more of that. But if they are quieter, reserved, maybe you need a tutor that is more contemplative and okay with sitting in silence and giving the shy student more time to get the courage to respond.

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## BREAKING DOWN THE TRIAL SESSION: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

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Once the tutor has done a trial session with you, they should have a trial session with your child. At this point, they have made it through all 4 steps and they are ready to teach your child.

I'd recommend hosting the session somewhere close, so that you can listen in. Now, there are a few key things to listen for.

- *Does the tutor ask your child questions?*
- *Is the tutor willing and able to explain ideas in multiple different ways?*

Asking your child how the session went is also a great way to gauge the effectiveness of the tutor—and the level of trust and rapport she built with your child.

Parents commonly tell me that our tutors were able to develop trust and rapport “on the very first session” with their child. How do we do that? And how have I been able to do that throughout my tutoring career?

The first is to establish and show off some sort of expertise in the subject. During the first few minutes of a new tutoring session, the student is watching closely. And you should be, too.

- *The tutor should establish credibility for themselves*
- *They should then show humility and an ability to share their knowledge*
- *A tutor should then show that the topic is not as hard as previously thought*

Once a tutor has demonstrated and established credibility, and been able to tell stories and express how this used to be hard for them, but they overcame it themselves and learned it. They have put themselves in a great position to teach.

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## HOW MANY TUTORS SHOULD YOU INTERVIEW?

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You meet with a couple of tutors. One seems good. And meeting with tutors can be hard. So the temptation is to just pull the trigger and hire someone. But the truth is you haven't seen enough of the applicant pool to make a decision after only seeing one or two tutors.

I have interviewed hundreds of tutors so I have a pretty good idea of what to look for. But even so, I still make sure to see at least 3-4 applicants for every position—even if I love the first one!

A good rule of thumb is to read 5 resumes for every interview. Therefore, you should easily be reading 15-20+ resumes for every subject. An inexperienced interviewer might want to read a minimum of 25 resumes and hold at least 5 interviews.

YES, all of this is a lot of work. BUT, choosing the best tutor for your child is very serious and SHOULD be a lot of work! There are a lot of important things to get right.

Instead of doing it all yourself, why not let someone like me take care of it for you?

I have years of experience matching kids of all ages with the perfect tutor and I have a rolodex of some of the most sought-after tutors in the Portland area.

Give me a call or send me an email and let my company, Tutor Portland, take care of you.

Enthusiastically,  
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