

Tutor interview questions

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What to expect

Tutoring interviews, whether with a tutoring company, agency or a family directly, focus less on formal credentials and more on how you actually run a session and handle the relationship side: students, parents and sometimes schools. Expect a mix of practical and interpersonal questions rather than technical grilling.

- **Behavioural:** Questions about past tutoring or teaching situations, used to check how you handle real student and parent interactions.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations, such as a disengaged student or a parent pushing for faster results, to see your judgement under pressure.
- **Process:** Questions about how you plan and structure a session or a learning program.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about communicating with parents and schools, since tutors often work directly with both.

Most tutoring interviews are a single conversation, sometimes with a short teaching demonstration or sample lesson plan requested beforehand. Expect a warm-up on your subject background and availability, then several scenario or behavioural questions, and a chance for you to ask about their student base, scheduling and how they support tutors.

1. Walk me through how you'd plan the first session with a new student.

Why they ask

Checks whether you have a real process for diagnosing gaps rather than just launching into content.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: describe your steps in order, from initial assessment to setting goals for the term.

Example answer

"I'd start by asking the student and, if possible, the parent what specifically is going wrong: is it a topic gap, exam technique, or confidence. Then I'd do a short diagnostic, a few questions across the relevant syllabus areas, to see where the actual gap sits rather than assuming. From that I'd set two or three concrete goals for the term, like closing a specific topic gap or improving exam timing, and agree how we'll track progress so the parent isn't left guessing."

2. Tell me about a time a student wasn't making progress despite regular sessions. What did you do?

Why they ask

Tests self-reflection and whether you adjust your approach rather than repeating the same method.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"I had a student preparing for NAPLAN who kept getting similar questions wrong session after session. The task was to figure out why repetition wasn't fixing it. I realised the issue wasn't the maths itself but reading comprehension in worded problems, so I shifted part of each session to breaking down question wording before touching the calculation. Within a few weeks he was solving the same style of question correctly because he understood what was being asked, not just how to calculate."

3. A parent tells you they want their child to jump two grade levels ahead by the end of term. How do you handle that conversation?

Why they ask

Tests your judgement under pressure and ability to manage expectations without damaging the relationship.

How to structure your answer

Scenario response: state the immediate response, the reasoning behind it, and how you'd follow up.

Example answer

"I'd listen to what's driving the request first, since sometimes it's about an upcoming exam rather than the grade level itself. Then I'd be honest about what's realistic given the student's current level, and reframe the goal around measurable progress, like closing specific gaps, rather than a grade-level label that isn't really the useful metric. I'd suggest we review progress against those markers partway through term so the parent sees it's being tracked, not dismissed."

4. How do you keep a student engaged in a subject they've told you they hate?

Why they ask

Behavioural question checking interpersonal skill and whether you can sustain motivation, not just deliver content.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"I tutored a student who found essay writing tedious and would shut down whenever we started planning one. Rather than pushing straight into structure, I let him choose topics closer to his interests for practice essays, and broke the writing into small stages so he wasn't facing a blank page. By the end of term he was still not enthusiastic about essays, but he could get through one without stalling, which was the realistic win."

5. How would you run a small-group session where students are at different levels?

Why they ask

Process question specific to small-group tutoring, which is common in this role and harder to manage than one-on-one.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: outline how you structure the group, manage pace and check individual understanding.

Example answer

"I'd set a shared task the whole group can start on, then move between students to give individual guidance rather than teaching to the middle. If one student finishes early I'd have an extension question ready, and if another is stuck I'd pull them aside briefly rather than slowing the whole group. I'd also check in with each student individually near the end to confirm what they actually understood, since group discussion can hide gaps."

6. What would you do if you disagreed with how a student's classroom teacher was explaining a topic?

Why they ask

Client-facing and judgement question, since tutors have to work alongside schools without undermining them.

How to structure your answer

Scenario response: state your position, the reasoning, and how you'd communicate it.

Example answer

"I wouldn't tell the student their teacher is wrong, since that puts them in an awkward position and can backfire. I'd teach the concept the way the syllabus expects it to be assessed, and if my explanation differs from the classroom approach, I'd frame it as another way to look at the same idea. If it seemed like a genuine misunderstanding rather than just a different teaching style, I'd raise it carefully with the parent rather than the school directly."