

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a TutorMate video overview? Yes indeed. Highly recommended: <http://tiny.cc/tutormate>

How do I get started as a tutor? Once your organization's TutorMate Coordinator informs you of the name of your particular tutor group, you need to register at this TutorMate website: <http://tutormate.org/register>. Upon registration, we'll send you a "Welcome" email with instructions on how to complete a required and fast online background check. You will also need to complete the quick online training. After you and approximately nine of your colleagues have completed both these steps, we'll form you all into a team of about ten individuals. We'll pair the team with a participating first grade room in your assigned district which is currently seeking tutors. Each team member is paired with one student for the whole school year. We will then email everyone on the team with the details about their student's name and reading level, as well as the name of the school and classroom teacher, and other information needed to start weekly tutoring.

Do I need experience with reading, tutoring, or computers? No tutoring experience is necessary, though basic computer proficiency is useful. IFL provides online training using an e-Learning platform. Training is self-paced and will take most people about one hour. After training is complete, and once you are actually tutoring, our interactive web application will guide you through every step of a typical tutoring session each week.

Who will my student be? Your student will be a first or second grader at an inner city public school. Teachers identify students who need extra help, but who are capable of solid growth during the year.

How do I connect with my student? You will start with a voice connection by phoning the classroom using a landline or cell phone. When your student comes to the phone, greet him or her and click on "Start Session". This begins the story-sharing **visual** aspect of TutorMate. Our web application will allow you to control what the student sees, and in what order, so that you and the student are "in synch". You will simply invite the student to read you **correctly leveled** stories, which you will jointly select from TutorMate's online library. Further you will play instructive reading-oriented word games together. There is no web-cam with TutorMate, by design.

What is my tutoring commitment? As a volunteer, you will tutor your student in reading for 30 minutes each week during the school year. Tutoring typically starts in October but this can vary. You will select a regular weekly tutoring timeslot during school hours, but remember that this time can always be changed. TutorMate scheduling is extremely flexible even for very busy professionals. You can tutor from anywhere, even when traveling, as long as you have a telephone and a computer with Internet access. You can skip weeks now and then for vacations or other reasons, but we do ask that you try to connect with your student during most non-holiday weeks.

What if I'm not sure I have time to tutor? If you're not sure about the time commitment, but think the odds are quite good that you can generally find 30 minutes during most weeks, we really urge you to sign up. As noted, we are not expecting 100% perfect participation each and every week. Just about every tutor who has tried tutoring has decided to continue. They quickly realize that the time commitment is minimal and the flexibility is great.



It all starts with literacy.

What if I can't make my scheduled tutoring timeslot? Not a problem. It is super easy to change your usual tutoring time slot, even at the last minute if you need to. The classroom tutoring schedule is accessible online so you easily can select an alternate time for a particular week, which we call a "makeup session".

What if my student is inattentive or disinterested? Feel free to start with a game. Typically, after students play a game or two, they are ready and eager to begin reading. If the classroom is noisy and seems distracting, encourage your student to raise the "Quiet Sign" that is housed near the computer. If you suspect that your student is bored or overwhelmed, feel free to go up or down a reading level to see if another level seems more appropriate. If you think you'd like to switch your student's level on an ongoing basis, please use the TutorMate web app to send a message to your student's teacher after the session to let him/her know of the change.

What if my student is absent? Most tutors simply try to call back in the next day or two by scheduling a make-up session. That's the best bet if your schedule permits. But if not, you can ask the greeter if the teacher would like you to tutor a different student. Many teachers may ask an unassigned student who might also benefit from the tutoring to sit down at the classroom TutorMate computer. Since you will not know the student's reading level, and you are only tutoring for a short time, we recommend that you choose a story from the C or D level. Please remember, however, that you are under no obligation to tutor another student.

Are there opportunities to meet my student in person? Yes indeed – a TutorMate program highlight! Usually twice per year (fall and spring) we urge the entire tutor team to visit the school and classroom as a group. Most of our tutors are in the same broad metro area as their students, making this possible. Here's a spring classroom visit on video by GM tutors: <http://tiny.cc/tutormategm> Note that the TutorMate Program does not encourage our online tutors to visit the school on an individual basis as this can be a distraction for teachers and students.

How can I contact my student's teacher? The TutorMate web application has a messaging feature to allow you to send questions and concerns, or to share your student's accomplishments, with the teacher. However, please be aware that teachers have limited time to review messages, so use this feature sparingly. Since teachers are busy throughout the school day, it is also important to remember that they most likely will not get back to you immediately. If you don't hear back after a few days, let us know.

How do I reach IFL for technical assistance? You can chat with IFL's technical support team by clicking on CHAT ASSISTANCE, which is accessible from every page of the tutoring program. You also can access tech support by calling a toll free number displayed within the TutorMate web application. Use the Chat Assistance button if the classroom phone is busy or unanswered OR if your student isn't seeing the same basic content you are.

What are the benefits of tutoring? Teachers report and our research confirms that students who are regularly tutored develop strong vocabularies and exhibit improved reading confidence, fluency, oral skills, and self-esteem. Tutors find it highly rewarding to experience the growth in their students' abilities during the school year. In addition, students and their tutors enjoy building warm and meaningful relationships.



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