

## Minimalist and Directive Tutoring – A Spectrum of Theories and Strategies

The discussion around what we perceive to be “minimalist” (letting the student do “all the work”) and “directive” (letting the tutor do “all the work”) is rich, complex, and ongoing. Below is a sampling of canonical works, placed on a spectrum from “minimalist” to “centrist” to “directive”\* with strategies associated with each approach.

	Article	Theory	Strategies
Minimalist	Jeff Brooks, “Minimalist Tutoring: Making Students Do All The Work” (1991)	“I would suggest that <b>when we refuse to edit, we become more active as educators.</b> In the writing center, we have the luxury of time the classroom teacher does not. We can spend time talking and listening, always focusing on the paper at hand” (1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sit beside the student rather than across from them</li> <li>• Sit back and let the student physically handle and mark the paper</li> <li>• Have the student read the paper aloud</li> <li>• Ask open ended questions to get the student to talk about their work</li> </ul>
Collaborative	Kenneth Bruffee, “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” (1984)	“...the tutee brings knowledge of the subject to be written about and the knowledge of the assignment. The tutor brings sensitivity to the needs and feelings of peers and knowledge of the conversations of discourse and of standard written English. And the conversation is structured in part by the demands of the teacher’s assignment and in part by the formal conventions of the communities the teacher represents” (644).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking (and thus writing/problem solving) is conversation internalized – converse with the student to reveal a student’s “internal conversation.”</li> <li>• Converse with the student in the language of the disciplinary discourse community (i.e. biology speak, statistics speak, etc.) so that they can eventually integrate the language into their thought processes</li> </ul>
	Muriel Harris, “Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors” (1995)	Harris highlights “ <b>encouraging independence,</b> ” “ <b>assisting with the acquisition of strategic knowledge,</b> ” and “ <b>assisting with affective concerns,</b> ” and “ <b>interpreting the meaning of academic language</b> ” as key reasons why a collaborative relationship between tutor and tutee is key.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empower students through conversation that engages their ideas/permits them to be in control</li> <li>• Model <i>how</i> to do something so that they can learn how it <i>feels</i> to do it on their own</li> <li>• Use motivational language to help students bypass feelings of anxiety</li> <li>• Help students decode and translate professor comments, prompts, etc.</li> </ul>



## Minimalist and Directive Tutoring – A Spectrum of Theories and Strategies

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<b>Directive</b>	Linda K. Shamon and Deborah H. Burns, "A Critique of Pure Tutoring" (1995)	"These instances of public tutoring...provide an opportunity to reflect upon the constellation of conditions that make directive tutoring fruitful. Three strands of research are important: <b>research on the development of expertise (including connections to imitations and modeling) helps explain the links between directive and cognitive development; theoretical explanations of subjectives help us understand directive tutoring and social development; research on academic literacy help us understand directive tutoring and disciplinary development</b> " (233-234).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow the student to observe, imitate and model the tutor so that they can learn good habits and the academic conventions</li> <li>• Allow the student to practice skills so that they can develop "widely valued repertoires"</li> </ul>
	Peter Carino, "Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring" (2003)	"However, blind adherence to the non-hierarchical ethic of peer tutoring treats the student as if he or she is a high-strung child, and can also <b>lead to inefficiency if the tutor refuses to take authority when necessary</b> " (105).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize where the power and authority lie in the given tutoring session and adjust how "present" you should be (i.e. a freshman in an intro class versus a senior writing his or her thesis)</li> </ul>

*\*Almost all the works cited above mention that the best approach is to be able to adjust according to the given tutoring session and the student*



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