4 Things to Keep in Mind When Looking for a Math Tutor for Your Child

Last year’s schooling may not have worked for your child – especially around math. As a parent, you might be concerned about your child having fallen behind in Algebra. Or maybe you’ve figured out that you cannot explain advanced math to your child. You might be ready for a math tutor. And that’s smart: Mathematics is important, and a tutor may help.

As someone who’s been teaching Math for fifteen years and also tutoring the subject for five, here are my thoughts on how to best support your child who is struggling in math – and how to find a tutor to help.

**1. Get Clear on Your Goals – And Your Child’s, Too!**

Have clear expectations about their schoolwork – ones that you both agree on. I have tutored students with goals different from the parents’ and that disconnect can be challenging.

Talk openly with your child about what they think is the problem. Be aware of your child’s learning style. Notice what works for them. Discuss with your child’s teacher about concerns and goals. The teacher may have some recommendations as well.

I had a parent hire me to tutor who had not informed their child, which made our first meeting awkward. Decide if you want your child on grade level or to excel? Encourage your child to work with others in their classroom.  There are times when fellow students can learn from each other. Check with the school if it offers afterschool programs that include tutoring or mentoring.  There are also free online resources such as MathisFun.com, youcubed.org, or khanacademy.org. For young children, I recommend playing math games and reading math focus books. Figure out what you want tutoring to accomplish: passing a class, fill in gaps, test prep, or enrichment.

**2. Know What Tutoring Options Are Out There**

Look in your community for the options available. Tutoring comes in many shapes and sizes – with different pros and cons. There are one-on-one sessions, small group sessions, online tutoring, and tutoring centers. Each one offers something different, and how you choose will depend on your child’s needs.

Hiring your neighborhood high school or college student to tutor your child may cost less or be more convenient.  A drawback could be this tutor may do the work for the student. The tutor should explain how to it and not doing it for them. They may lack the teaching skill. One of my tutorees, on the first session, was surprised when I expected him to do his work after showing him an example. He was incredulous and stated that his previous tutor just did their own homework for them.

Hiring a one-on-one or small group tutor with experience in teaching would be the ideal. The student gets individualize attention. The teaching is geared for them. The drawback may be the cost. I think, however, this is the best option in the interest of the child.

Be aware that tutoring centers, could have set curricula that are used in a systematic way to cover all concepts. Some places allow you to drop off your child multiple times a week and for several hours. This can act like an afterschool program. The drawbacks may be the cost, employees who are not certified tutors, in addition of coverage of unnecessary subject matter. Some places hire college math majors, who may or may not have experience in teaching.

**3. Vet the Person or Establishment Before Deciding.**

You can find tutors by word of mouth, online marketplaces, Yelp, and Google. Keywords for a search: math tutor or tutor in your city. Research the certification, credentials, and fingerprinting of any candidate.

Yes-fingerprinting. Often as parents, we get busy and don’t stop to think about this person being safe whether in person or online.

You can check with the [Better Business Bureau](http://www.bbb.org), [National Tutoring Association](https://www.ntatutor.com/), or [Commission on Teacher Credential](https://www.ctc.ca.gov/).

**4. Set up Your First Tutoring Session!**

Okay. So you are ready to go with an option.

If you decided on a tutor in a one-on-one situation, here are some questions to ask: What are the available tutoring times? How long is a session? What is the cost? Be prompt for the appointment and have your student prepared with materials and questions! A good tutor could be tightly scheduled, so accurate scheduling and keeping your appointment is important.

Tutoring centers sometimes have their own curriculum. You will need to check if it aligns with what’s being covered in school. Even after you’ve hired a tutor or tutoring center, stay involved and take time occasionally to re-evaluate if this is working for your child. It is your child who will be working with the tutor and they needs to be comfortable with the tutor.

Your child may need a tutor when they have fallen behind by a quarter of year. Math topics build on one another and they will need the gaps filled in. Finding the right fit for your child will prove to be worth the effort. You know you have the right fit when the student *wants* to go to tutoring and their grades are improving.

Mathematics is vital for student success in their educational life and getting help early can be beneficial for your child’s confidence.