

THE TUTOR WEBSITE

PRESENTS:

'A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PRIVATE TUITION'

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS ON HIRING A PRIVATE TUTOR IN THE UK

IN ASSOCIATION WITH LOTUS TUTORS



Version 2

Foreword:

'In order to help our children to rise up rather than be weighed down by educational aspirations it can at times be helpful to employ the resources of a good tutor. A good tutor can raise self-esteem and confidence and help highlight strengths whilst identifying weaknesses.

A Parent's Guide to Private Tuition is a very useful, practical and sensible overview to an area that can be a minefield for parents entering into this world for the first time. The Tutor Website's pragmatic and easy to read guide is a must read for any parent who wants to navigate the world of tutors and learn how to help children be motivated, creative learners and in turn successful adults.'

Elaine Halligan, Director of [The Parent Practice London](#)

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An Introduction to Private Tuition in the UK

The home tuition industry is said to be continually growing in the UK with more parents hiring tutors than ever before. According to a report carried out on behalf of [The Sutton Trust](#), approximately 1 in 5 (22%) pupils have received home tuition, which is a 4% increase from 2005. In London, students are almost twice as likely to use a tutor as elsewhere in the UK with a percentage of 43%. It has been reported that students are most likely to receive tuition in Maths (77%), followed by English (55%) and science (30%). Personal opinion varies on why this could be – a more affordable industry perhaps? Or a feeling that home tuition can make all the difference? Until recently, there has been no governing body for home educators in the UK. However, In May 2013, The Centre for Market Reform launched a proposal to form The Tutors Association with the aim of providing minimum standards of education for private tutors and drawing up a code of ethics by which all members will be expected to abide. It's proposed that tutors teaching secondary-age pupils should hold university degrees in their chosen subject and tutors teaching children up to the age of 11 should hold a general degree in any subject.

Many of the UK's largest tuition agencies have shown support for the proposal of the voluntary membership which aims to promote quality assurance in the industry. The Association intends to hold an annual conference for tutors and organisational providers to facilitate the sharing of best practice.

The Tutors Association is due to launch its membership packages in October 2013. Both organisational and individual memberships include access to free or member-discounted legal and tax advice, insurance, discounted teaching and learning materials, publications, and seminar and conference attendance.

Previously, there's been much debate about how qualified a tutor needs to be in order to practice their trade. As a general rule however, it's considered that they should be significantly more qualified than their students. A tutor is far more likely to be seen as valuable in the eyes of a student or parent if they have shown dedication to the subject they are teaching. It also gives students and parents piece of mind that they know their content.

Qualified teachers often decide to offer their services as home educators to supplement their full-time teaching job. Newly qualified or retired teachers also offer their services as personal tutors. Qualified

teachers are sometimes the preferred choice for students and their parents as their previous experience clearly shows their expertise. On the other hand, many students consciously decide to choose someone who is not a teacher, who may have a slightly different approach to learning.

Who Uses Private Tutors?

Commonly, tutors are used by students of high school age to help with their studies and to aid their understanding of exam techniques. However, parents often hire tutors for their children at a younger age, especially in areas where the eleven plus examination is used.

There's also much demand from international students to improve their English skills and a lot of tutors teach English as a foreign language. Many adults use the services of a personal tutor to aid them in their own studies and private businesses often employ tutors to aid employees in more specialist subjects such as accounting or law.

Those studying music academically or leisurely also use tutors to improve their skill level.

Why do Parents Hire Tutors?

Personal tuition is a great way to improve a student's grades. Whether a student is passing with flying colours or needs a little extra help with their studies, an appropriately qualified tutor can make all the difference in helping a student achieve their goals.

Whereas home tuition used to be considered somewhat of a luxury, demand for the service has ensured that prices are now competitively affordable. Tutoring prices vary, dependant on a tutor's experience and qualifications, but generally, tutors tend to charge between £15 - £70 per hour dependant on subject and location.

Using the services of a tutor can often give students a much needed confidence boost. Due to the 'one to one' nature of home tuition, tutors can quickly identify which areas a student may need improvement in – something that students may not be able to identify on their own. Sometimes all it takes to instill a little confidence in a student is to have a tutor identify what they are doing correctly and suggest how they may improve in the areas they are falling short in.

With UK class sizes at their largest of recent years, it's said that teachers often do not have as much time to spend with students on an individual basis as they once did. With a tutor, a student has their full

attention. This time can prove invaluable as it not only assures that a student is covering the relevant course work, but it also makes certain that their approach to course work is correct.

How Do I know If My Child Needs a Tutor?

There are many reasons that parents choose to hire a tutor for their child. Some of the signs that your child may need extra support can include:

- ▶ Struggling with homework exercises
- ▶ Concerned feedback from class teachers
- ▶ A drop in assessment results
- ▶ General concern from your child regarding their studies

On the other hand, you may want to consider hiring a tutor for your child in order to:

- ▶ Increase confidence in a subject
- ▶ Supplement classroom teaching
- ▶ Ensure the best results for university places

Whatever the reason for deciding to use a tutor, it's important to discuss the reasons with your child. If a student is happy to use the services of a tutor and thinks it will make a difference, there is a higher likelihood that the tuition will be effective.

Where to Find a Tutor

Tutors generally tend to advertise online or in their local area. It's worth having a look at local bulletin boards in libraries, community centres or town halls. Many tutors also advertise in local newspapers or magazines. Word of mouth is also another good source of finding a tutor. Asking other parents who have used a tutor can be a good way of ensuring that the tutor is credible and good at their job.

Searching For Tutors Online

One of the quickest and most effective ways of finding a personal tutor is online. Many tutors have their own websites and there are several tutor directories in the UK that list home educators by area. When searching for a tutor, think about the keywords that will bring up what you are looking for – What subject, level and area do you want to search. For example, 'A level maths tutor in London' will show

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more specific results than 'tutors in London'. It may be worth searching for a few different keywords relating to your needs in order to increase your options as to which directory to use.

Private Tutoring Agencies

Many parents turn to private tuition agencies to find a good private tutor. Tuition agencies will apply for a CBS check on tutors' behalves, which can give parents piece of mind. One agency that provides enhanced CBS checks for their educators is [Lotus Tutors](#). Both professional tutoring companies, they vet their tutors thoroughly, give regular feedback and are a one stop shop for most tuition subjects.

How to Choose the Correct Tutor

Here are some questions to consider when deciding on which tutor would be most suitable for your child's needs:

- ▶ What are the tutor's qualifications?

As already mentioned, there is no formal accreditation for tutors in the UK so make sure that the tutor you choose is qualified to a level that you, as a parent, deem suitable.

- ▶ Do they have a CBS certificate?

CRB stands for Criminal Records Bureau; they are an Executive Agency of the Home Office and provide wider access to criminal record information through its service in England and Wales. In Scotland, the equivalent agency is Disclosure Scotland and in Northern Ireland, the agency is known as Access Northern Ireland.

- ▶ What happens during lessons?

This will vary depending on the tutors' preferred approach to education, what subject is being tutored and the time of year. At the very least, a tutor should be able to explain their plan of action to students and parents and show appropriate structure in their lesson plans. The content of a lesson will be determined by the subject being studied. Subjects such as English and Art for example, where answers are often open to interpretation, may often take a more 'discursive' form and involve less methodical practice. Subjects such as math and science however, may be more likely to follow the logic of working through practical examples during the lesson.

The time of year a student starts a course of tuition will also determine what will happen during lessons. At the beginning of the academic year, tutors generally tend to focus on class-related tuition, so as to provide a supplement to the coursework outlined by the school curriculum. From January onwards, tutors are normally at their busiest as the demand for exam preparation increases and therefore lessons tend to be more orientated towards final exams.

- ▶ How does the tutor keep up to date with the school curriculum?

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This is a very relevant question as not all tutors are teachers and therefore need to source their information from elsewhere. Tutors should be expected to keep up to date with the school curriculum from a range of sources. Of course, if someone is actively tutoring when you meet with them, then they will already have a fairly good insight into the course requirements. Tutors often have friends who are teachers, who are able to clear up any uncertainties that may arise during lessons. Each UK country's National Curriculum website is a good source of up to date information that can be used by tutors.

▶ How much does the tutor charge?

It's essential that a price is confirmed before the first lesson so as to avoid future disagreement. Tutors normally charge on an hourly basis but some may give discounts if a student or parent agrees to a certain amount of hours over a certain period of time. Tutors generally tend to charge £15 - £70 per hour, some charge slightly less, and some slightly more. Experience and qualifications are generally a determining factor in how much they decide to charge. Some people may also provide discounted rates to small groups of students who are interested in being taught together.

▶ Does the tutor have references you can check?

Experienced tutors should have a list of telephone numbers they can provide for previous students and parents. It's recommended that you call these references before agreeing to any lessons, to ensure that the references are genuine. Those who are relatively new to tutoring may not have contact details for previous students or parents, in this instance, it is even more essential that you check any references you have been provided with. At the very least, new tutors should be able to provide references from previous employers or university lecturers. Many will also have written testimonials from previous students and parents. Such testimonials should clearly show their referee's contact details and these should be contacted regardless of what the testimonial claims.

What is Online Tuition?

Online tuition is when students connect with tutors over the internet via a software application such as Skype or MSN Messenger. Such tuition normally happens in real-time and requires both teacher and student to have a webcam and headset in order to interact. There are several specialist websites that offer online tuition using technology such as virtual whiteboards.

Some advantages of being tutored online include:

- ▶ Some students find interacting over the internet more effective than in a classroom, surrounded by other pupils. With online tuition, there are fewer distractions from other students.
- ▶ As lessons essentially take place at home, via a computer, students have more control over their learning environment and have the flexibility to choose the location in which they are tutored.
- ▶ Being tutored online can be more efficient than attending classes elsewhere as there is no travel time involved.

Some disadvantages of online tuition:

- ▶ Students may become overly-reliant on online tuition and discouraged from interaction with other students.
- ▶ There are some practical subjects that are not suitable for online tuition – art and design, for example.
- ▶ A lack of human interaction can be problematic, particularly for younger students if they do not understand what is being taught.

An Outline of the UK School Education System

The National Curriculum is the system by which school-aged children are taught and assessed on their academic ability. The Curriculum dictates the subjects and stages pupils are taught throughout their school careers. From the age of five to sixteen, children who attend state schools are expected to learn under the Curriculum.

The main aim of the school education system is to ensure that all children are taught the same subjects at the same level and are educated from the same coursework.

Schools themselves, have the freedom to decide the way in which the school curriculum is taught as long as its standards and guidelines are adhered to. In England, as of April 2012, the curriculum is set by [The Teaching Agency](#). In Scotland, the school curriculum is set by [Learning and Teaching Scotland](#) (LTS). Both websites have an array of information regarding the current school syllabus and examination procedures.

The Key Stages of Learning

The National Curriculum itself is laid out in terms of pupils' ages and year groups. Before starting school, children are taught under the EYFS, which stands for Early Years Foundation Stage – this normally applies to children under the age of five. From ages five until seven, children are taught at Key Stage 1 level, where the core subjects of Maths, English and Science are taught and assessed through examination. When a child reaches the age of 7, they are taught under Key Stage 2 until they reach the age of 10 or equivalently reach year 6 in their school year, where they undergo national tests and classroom examinations in the core subjects listed at Key Stage 1. These classroom examinations continue until a child reaches their seventh school year and are then taught under the Key Stage 3 criteria. When a child reaches the age of 14 or school year 10, they learn under Key Stage 4 and many begin taking their GCSE exams at this stage. Certainly, by the time a pupil reaches 16, students are generally expected to be taking their GCSE's.

Key Stages and Private Tuition

The parents of children as young as 5 or 6 have been known to use private tutors to aid their children's learning and many private tutors do offer their tuition services at the Key Stage levels. At this age, it's particularly important to be aware of a child's learning capacity and not to overload them with too much information or indeed study time which may have a negative impact on their well-being. Private tutors who offer their tuition services at primary education level, should be CRB checked and hold a valid, recent certificate to prove so.

Eleven Plus Examinations

Schools pupils sit the Eleven Plus examination in their final year of primary school. In the UK, all schools used to have this examination but in recent years, only a few councils use the exam. Many of the councils that do use the exam do not teach the exam technique as part of the school curriculum, therefore eleven plus private tuition is very popular in some parts of England. A good source of information on the 11+ plus exam can be found at [Eleven Plus Exams](#), a site which has been set up specifically, by a parent, in order to help others understand the 11+ system.

Tuition and Schools

Local Education Authorities don't hold lists of private tutors that can be hired privately although they do provide their own private tutors for students who are unable to attend school or who require special education arrangements.

Your child's school may be a good point of contact for finding a personal tutor. Speak with your child's class teacher and let them know about your concerns. Teachers often know of other teachers who offer tuition at evenings or weekends.

Tutoring in Schools Programme

Until August 2011, there was a government scheme in place in secondary schools in England where qualified teachers were able to work as private tutors in secondary schools. This programme provided one to one lessons to pupils. This scheme no longer runs but information can be found on the [Department of Education's website](#).

Tuition Agencies in Schools

Until recently, tuition agencies were not associated with state schools in the UK. However, it has been reported that some schools have taken on board the idea of private tuition and now offer pupils extra lessons provided through a private tuition agency.

More information about tuition agencies in schools can be found on the [BBC Education website](#)

Playing a Part in Your Child's Tuition

In most cases, enquiries for personal tuition tend to come from parents therefore understandably; parents are keen to know how their child's lessons are going. It's important to keep up to date with your child's progress and this can be done in different ways:

1. Speak with the tutor after lessons and ask what the lesson's focus was. Ask if there were any positive aspects of the session and ask about which areas they intend to focus on during the next lesson.
2. If you don't have the opportunity to discuss the lesson afterwards you can always keep in contact with the tutor by telephone or email.
3. Ask for a monthly progress report. Having a progress report can be a good way to ensure that your child's tutor is covering all relevant coursework. It also allows you to see exactly what the tutor has been focusing on.

It's also important to recognise the limitations of a tutor. Be realistic in your expectations of what your child can achieve from their one to one lessons. Setting expectations too high can lead to unnecessary disappointment on the day of the exam results. On the other hand, it's important to make sure that the tutor is striving for the best possible grade with your child.

Overall, it's important to have a positive relationship with your child and their tutor, built on trust and honesty.

Safety Awareness

As of the 17th June 2013, The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) have merged into the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). As a result of this merge, CRB checks are now called DBS checks.

DBS checks are required for certain jobs or voluntary work. For example, someone may need to undergo a DBS check in order to work with children, work in healthcare or to apply to foster or adopt a child.

For people wishing to obtain a criminal record check in Scotland, the application process is different and is administered by Disclosure Scotland. In Northern Ireland, applications are overseen by Access Northern Ireland as part of the Department of Justice (NI).

Who Can Ask for a DBS Check?

Employers aren't usually allowed to ask job applicants about any previous convictions; however, for jobs that specifically require a DBS check, employers are allowed to enquire about spent convictions.

For more information on which roles require a DBS check, the DBS eligibility guidance lists most roles that are eligible for a check. However, the guidance isn't comprehensive, and it's advised that you should contact the DBS if you're unsure.

Employers provide applicants with a form to complete and return alongside any relevant documents proving your identity.

Who Can Apply For a DBS Check?

Employers can apply for a DBS check on behalf of potential or existing employees.

However, individuals can't apply for a DBS check on themselves and must be over 16 years of age.

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A 'basic disclosure' is available for people who want to apply for a check on their own, which provides details of any unspent convictions. This can be obtained from Disclosure Scotland and be applied to from any individual anywhere in the UK.

Types of Criminal Records Check

There are 3 types of criminal records check. The employer or organisation requesting the check should provide the applicant with more information about what level of check is required.

- Standard DBS Check

A Standard DBS check costs £26 and details spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings. It normally takes about 2 weeks for a standard check to process.

- Enhanced DBS Check

Enhanced checks cost £44 and include all details outlined in a standard check plus any additional information held locally by police forces that is considered relevant to the post applied for.

- Enhanced DBS with list checks

An Enhanced DBS with list checks costs £44 and include all details outlined in an enhanced check plus a check of the appropriate DBS barred lists.

- Further Information

DBS checks for volunteers are free of charge. This includes anyone who spends time helping people and:

- isn't being paid (apart from travel and other approved out of pocket expenses)
- isn't only looking after a close relative

An employer can only apply for a check if the job or role specifically requires one. Employers must tell the applicant why they're being checked and where they can get independent advice.

DBS checks don't have an official expiry date. Any information included will be accurate at the time the check was carried out. It is up to an employer to decide if a new check is needed.

Applicants and employers can use the DBS update service to keep a certificate up to date or carry out checks on an existing certificate, for example, for a potential employee.

Personal Safety Advice for Students and Parents

- ▶ Always make initial contact with tutors by email and then by telephone. Not all tutors' telephone numbers are provided on their adverts, which is at the tutor's own discretion, although a tutor should be willing to provide a telephone number by email before any face to face meetings are arranged. If you, as a student or a parent, have any reservations about a tutor being unwilling to provide this information upon contact, we suggest you do not proceed with face to face contact.
- ▶ Do not give out your home address until you have spoken with your tutor by telephone and feel that you have enough reassuring information to proceed with a face to face meeting.
- ▶ Never arrange to meet a tutor by yourself at home, always ensure that there will be other people in the house during the tutor's visit. Students meeting a tutor for the first time should always have someone else present, ideally a parent or guardian. For parents meeting tutors for the first time, the same applies – always make sure there are other people present. It's also essential that other people remain in the house at all times during future lessons.
- ▶ It's recommended that lessons take place in an open room in the house, for example, the kitchen.
- ▶ If you, as a parent arrange to meet a tutor in a public place, it's still essential that you arrange to meet your tutor with another person.

Useful Links

www.revisionworld.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/learning

www.bbc.co.uk/languages

<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/>

www.deni.gov.uk

www.education.gov.uk

www.oxfam.org.uk/education

www.ltscotland.org.uk

www.learningdisabilities.org.uk

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk>

www.sqa.org.uk

www.wales.gov.uk

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Private Tuition Forums

www.tes.co.uk/forums

<http://forums.moneysavingexpert.com>

Educational Advice For Parents

www.thegoodschoolsguide.co.uk

www.schoolzone.co.uk

Parenting Advice

www.theparentpractice.co.uk

Safety Advice

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.suzylamplugh.org

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Other Publications by The Tutor Website

[The Tutor's Guidebook](#), published 2012. Available as a free download from The Tutor Website.

[The Private Tuition Boom](#), published 2013. Available as a free download from The Tutor Website.

[The Tutor Website](#) is an online resource providing practical advice to students, parents and tutors on private tuition in the UK through our publications, blog articles and news items. We also provide free access to our tutor directory, allowing parents and tutors to find private tutors in their local area.