

# Tutoring Routines Guide

This is a guide to the instructional routines listed on the PAAER website under “Tutors.” All the routines referenced below can be found at <https://www.paadultedresources.org/tutors>. If you would like to explore other routines, a web search for “instructional routines” or “instructional routines for [subject]” will yield many high-quality options.

## Tutoring Routines Overview

Tutoring routines are flexible instructional methods that volunteers can use regularly, adjusting the content as needed to meet the needs of their student(s). Tutors can incorporate one or two of the routines into their lessons, and classroom aides can use routines with individuals or groups of students as directed by the lead instructor. Tutoring routines are standards-aligned and provide students with structured, regular practice of key academic skills.

## Choosing a Routine

When choosing a routine, keep your purpose in mind. Do you want a consistent warm-up to get your lessons started? Are you looking for a way to support students with a specific type of task? If you know what purpose you want the routine to serve, it will be easier to identify one or two that will fit well in your lessons.

### Warm-Up Routines

Routines are a fantastic way to begin your lessons. By beginning the lesson with a predictable routine, there is a clear transition into the focus of your lesson. Students benefit from knowing what to expect and how to participate, and the routine provides a clear signal that class has begun. Using a routine consistently also gives students who arrive late a chance to jump into the lesson without much assistance. In addition, since the routines center on student participation, they help prepare students for active learning throughout the rest of the lesson.

Many of the routines can work as warm-ups, but these three work especially well, and can be adapted to almost any subject matter:

- [Categories](#)
- Notice and Wonder ([ESL version](#) or [Math version](#))
- [Which One Doesn't Belong?](#)

### Routines to Review and Practice

Routines allow students to put the skills and knowledge they learned in past lessons to work. Students can practice material taught recently or review skills that will be built on in upcoming lessons.

These routines lend themselves to reviewing or practicing previously taught material:

- [Collaborative Oral Reading](#)
- [Plot Twists: Grammar Rules and Parts of Speech](#)
- [Taboo \(Writing Narratives\)](#)
- [Writing Self-Evaluation](#)
- [And Another Question ...](#)
- [Categories \(Sorting and Organizing\)](#)
- [Decide and Defend](#)
- [Which One Doesn't Belong?](#)

## Routines for Assessment

All routines can be used to assess, but some are especially designed for assessing individual student's mastery of specific skills and knowledge. Assessment routines show what individual students are capable of and where they might need more support.

These routines are especially good for assessing individual student skills:

- [Collaborative Oral Reading](#)
- [Taboo \(Writing Narratives\)](#)
- [Writing Self-Evaluation](#)
- [Decide and Defend](#)

## Routines to Teach Strategies

Some of the routines included here are intended to help students develop strategies they can use for practicing certain types of tasks. In many cases, these strategies can be adapted to work with various materials. In some cases, though, you may find that a routine you use regularly during the course of one unit is not useful when you switch to another. Some of these routines can also get phased out as students become less reliant on you to coach them through the strategy.

These routines focus on a strategy for completing a specific type of task:

- [Analyzing an Author's Purpose](#)
- [Quadrant Chart \(Vocabulary\)](#)
- [Reporter's Questions](#)
- [And Another Question ...](#)
- [Geometry](#)
- [Numberless Word Problems](#)
- [Three Reads \(Math\)](#)

## Using Routines in Your Lessons

### Getting Started with Routines

The first few times that you use a routine in your lesson, plan extra time to give instructions and help the student(s) understand what they should do. Be sure to explain the goal of the routine. (You can find this in the "purpose" section of the Routine Description.)

Before you introduce a routine to your student(s), think about any adaptations or adjustments you want to make so that the routine will work well for your students and class content.

**Example:** The first time he uses [Which One Doesn't Belong?](#), Bill explains to his math student, Kelly, that she can choose any of the options; he is more interested in discussing her thinking than identifying a right or wrong response. Because Kelly is not always confident in sharing her ideas, he also provides her with a sentence frame to use when discussing their choices: "\_\_\_\_\_ doesn't belong because \_\_\_\_\_." Once Kelly has had a chance to make a choice and share her thinking, Bill challenges her to think of a reason why one of the other four choices does not belong. Although he plans to share his ideas in the future if it's helpful, Bill chooses not to take on a student role in the routine this time, since he knows that Kelly might misinterpret this as him giving the right answer. He also wants to work up to the point of finding a reason why each of the options doesn't belong.

### Making Routines ... Routine

Routines are most effective when they are used often enough that teachers and students know what to do without spending a lot of time on instructions. If you have a consistent group of students, begin using a routine one to two times a week for three to four weeks in a row. Then, the task becomes a routine. If you stop using a routine for more than a couple weeks, you should plan to remind students how it works when you reintroduce it.

If your group of students experiences a lot of fluctuations due to attendance issues or frequent roster changes, you might need to be extra consistent with the routine, using it every class or on a specific day of the week. Encourage students to explain the routine to their peers or use their responses as models for the students who are learning the routine. Your most consistent students will benefit from regularity, and new or inconsistent students will have a sense that the class has a structure they can fit into.

**Example:** Wanda's ESL group has several students with inconsistent attendance, and students tend to move in and out of the group due to schedule changes and other life events. She started using [And Another Question...](#) every Wednesday after students had done some textbook exercises with the vocabulary she introduced on Mondays. Wanda always posts example follow-up questions in a place where students can see them and models the procedure with a student who is familiar with the routine. Then, she pairs the students up, making sure that each pair includes one student familiar with the routine. If a pair seems unsure of what to do, she steps in to clarify or model, but mostly, she listens for how well students are using the target vocabulary and follow-up questions.

## Adaptations and Adjustments

With a little creativity, many of the routines can be adapted for different content areas, levels, contexts, or group sizes. Below are some ideas. Use what you know about your learners to make the changes.

### Using Routines with Different Numbers of Students

Some routines work better with more students, while others can function with one-on-one tutoring. Ultimately, any routine can work with any number of students.

Consider what adaptations you will need in a small group, a large group, or a one-on-one session. Be prepared to be the necessary partner for a student, too.

**Example:** Matt, a classroom aide, is reviewing prepositions of direction with the students. He uses the routine [Plot Twist](#) to practice making sentences about locations and buildings in a town. The lead teacher pairs him with one student for this activity. Matt prepares a blank page from the student materials and explains the grammar point they are focusing on. On the paper, he writes the sentence: The bank is across from the library. He underlines the words across from to indicate that the student should rewrite the sentence using a different preposition of direction in place of the underlined words. The student is familiar with this routine and writes: The bank is next to the library. The student underlines the library and passes the paper back to Matt. Matt changes the new underlined phrase. Two more students arrive, and the lead teacher asks Matt if he could include them in his group. Matt explains to the three students that he will supervise while they go in a circle, following the instructions. Student #2 reads the most recent sentence on the paper, changes the underlined phrase, and underlines a word or phrase in the new sentence, then passes the paper to Student #3. Matt supervises and directs Student #3 when he's finished to pass the paper back to Student #1 to continue the circle. At the end, Matt reads all the sentences out loud while the students listen. He asks students if there are any other prepositions of direction that they practiced but didn't include in the sentences.

### Adjusting the Level of a Routine

All the routines will fit a range of levels. There are several ways to adjust the level of a routine. The most straightforward way to adjust the complexity of a routine is by changing the content.

**Example:** This material would be for an intermediate to advanced level class:

[Decide and Defend](#): Fatima walks around the edge of a circular island and finds that it measures about 0.97 miles. Fatima wonders what the distance is if she walks a straight path from one end to the other end of the island. After calculating, she decides the distance is about 0.3 miles. Decide if Fatima's calculation is correct or incorrect and state your reasoning.

**Example:** This material would be for a beginner level class:

[Decide and Defend](#): Fatima needs to round 0.51 to the nearest unit. Fatima decides that would be 0.5. Decide if Fatima is correct or incorrect and state your reasoning.

In some cases, you can lower the level of the routine by breaking down a task into smaller pieces, providing examples, offering sentence starters for written or oral tasks, having students discuss their work with a partner before sharing it with the whole group, or offering a choice of written vs. oral responses. For reading routines, you can focus students on a small section of a longer text.

Conversely, to make a routine more challenging, ask students to do more of it independently, take away supports like examples or sentence starters, or ask students to consider a longer or more complex reading passage. For some routines, you can ask students to provide multiple answers.

**Example:** Lowering the difficulty level:

When Ellen first introduces the [Three Reads](#) routine in her lessons with Marcus, he is very hesitant to try math word problems at all. She starts by choosing some problems that use familiar situations and whole numbers, even though Marcus is mostly able to calculate with fractions and decimals. They complete each step in the routine together, as a conversation, with Ellen recording Marcus's thoughts on paper. Then, Ellen provides the question for him to answer using math that she knows he can do independently.

**Example:** Raising the difficulty level:

Lucia teaches a small group of math students. They can handle simple word problems easily, but sometimes get confused by multistep problems or unusual question types. After using the [Three Reads](#) routine with them a few times, Lucia puts the students in charge of completing Steps 1 and 2 independently, including recording their own thinking. After a few minutes reviewing the problem on their own, the students share all the quantities (things that can be counted or measured) they could find with the group. Then Lucia shares two questions based on the situation they examined: one more straightforward problem and one that involves more steps or more challenging math. The students can choose to answer either or both questions in the time she gives them, after which they discuss their answers and their processes as a group.

## Remote or HyFlex Instruction

Routines can be used in remote classes as effectively as they can be used in in-person classes. Students may first need to learn digital features such as chat, annotation, and breakout rooms in the webinar platform. Tutors may also need to teach students to use technology such as Google Docs or Google Slides for writing or drag-and-drop activities. Some routine activities take longer in the beginning due to the need to teach students how to use the technology. Be patient with students and know that using new technology is also a routine!

If you are teaching new technology and a new routine, choose content that is easily accessible to your students. Allow them to get familiar with the tools and the routine structure before you increase the academic challenge.

Be easy on yourself, too! No routine is done perfectly the first time. Take time to reflect on what went well and what needs to be modified. The more you do a routine, the more you and your students will become comfortable with the process.