



**FINDING AND KEEPING
GREAT TUTORING
CLIENTS (PART 2)**

5 STEPS FOR TURNING AN UNHAPPY CLIENT INTO A RETURNING TUTEE

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Finding and Keeping Great Tutoring Clients (Part 2): 5 Steps for Turning an Unhappy Client into a Returning Tutee

I remember receiving the email like it was yesterday. A family that was seemingly happy with the prospect of tutoring together following our assessment had emailed to say they were disappointed with the service they were receiving from my tutoring company. They also stated that they were considering going elsewhere. This was not a common occurrence and it left me uncertain of what went wrong. I took a few minutes to process the email and re-focus. I had spent time reading and researching conflict resolution that previous winter and drew on it to come up with the following five point strategy to turn this negative into a redemptive positive.

1. **Set up a time to connect with the client face to face.** Whether in-person or through online video, set up a time to connect. Inquire via email that you are sorry to read about this experience and you would like to learn more. Offer a couple of options for times to meet. You are reaching out and showing that you are concerned. A great first step.
2. **Ask specific questions, listen to specific feedback.** At the meeting, ask specific questions such as:
 - I am sorry to hear you are unhappy, what parts of your child's tutoring are not working out?
 - Are there aspects of the tutoring that you and/or your child are pleased with?
 - Let's turn this around, would you be open to having a brief discussion on this?

Listen to their feedback and to key points they bring up more than once. Offer hope with the possibility of turning things around.

3. **Work out an alternative path for your client.** For this portion, re-iterate your client's concerns and then share a different approach for the tutoring going forward that eliminates the issue or issues they are having. Show you are listening and eager to work with them and not just placate.

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4. **Ask your client their thoughts on this new direction.** This collaborative approach while being facilitated by you shows care and conscientiousness to a client's needs. Again, listen and re-iterate.
5. **Confirm with your client and provide a special thank you offer.** Thank your client for taking the time to talk and that you look forward to continuing to work as a team. Provide your client a special gift after as a show of thanks and, going forward, keep regular lines of communication open to continue client satisfaction.

For my own client, their concern was the lack of materials being brought by the tutor to lessons. We agreed that this was not fair to the client as these materials were required for the custom program. I connected with the tutor and inquired about how we can make the custom materials more accessible for her. She mentioned having them in an online hub versus via email would be best. We set up the hub and provided the client access too. The client could see ahead of time what was going to be worked on and the tutor felt more organized and prepared to teach. We had a wonderful redemption with this client who stayed for two more amazing years.

A few tips:

1. Conflict resolution can be a stressful process. Take some deep breaths before your conference, make some notes as well so you have a roadmap to guide you during your meeting.
2. Do not offer discounts as a special thank you. You don't want to devalue yourself; you want to resolve the conflict on a high note. This is a relationship, not a financial transaction.
3. Provide refunds at your discretion and/or when appropriate based on the client's concerns.
4. Sometimes an unhappy client will remain an unhappy client and leave. It is okay, do your best to turn the relationship around and be good to yourself.

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The next part of Finding and Keeping Great Clients will explore how to revitalize a long term client relationship that has become stagnant.