

Avoiding Unconscious Assumptions Rubric

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify unconscious assumptions.
- Apply strategies to prevent making unconscious assumptions while tutoring.

Research Recommended Approach:

Tutors should avoid making assumptions such as assuming the student does not know how to answer the problem or is lacking understanding because it is taking them a long time to complete the assignment. This is an *unconscious assumption*, or bias, made by the tutor

Research shows that students perform better and learn more when held to high expectations. Sometimes, tutors may lower their expectations or make an assignment easier for a student because they assume they cannot learn the content or because they feel empathetic towards them. You can lessen the impact of making unconscious assumptions by first discovering your blind spots and then actively working to remove any stereotypes or attitudes that may affect your interactions with students. One powerful strategy to prevent making unconscious assumptions while tutoring is to ask yourself questions self-checking for bias. Some questions to ask yourself, include:

What makes me think that?

What evidence leads me to that conclusion?

Would this decision be different if the student was of a different race or background?

How would I make this decision if this were someone close to me, like a close friend or family member?

When people are aware that unconscious bias exists, they are more likely to try to correct it. Increasing awareness of your own unconscious biases takes time. By asking yourself questions prompting self-reflection of your own thoughts and assumptions, you are making progress in limiting the impact of making unconscious assumptions.

PREDICT RESPONSES

Tutor responses need to: tutors should apply the strategy of not making any assumptions regarding a student and only go by what is presented. Tutors should provide positive affirmation that focuses on the learning process

Correct (1): Tutor does not make or express any unconscious assumptions AND the tutor provides positive affirmation by focusing on the student's progress towards learning.

Incorrect (-1): Tutor makes or expresses unconscious assumptions, e.g., assumes a student is struggling if working slowly, or the tutor does not provide positive affirmation towards the progress in learning.

| Tutor response: | Rationale |
|---|---|
| I like that you asking questions and seeking help. Can you tell me how you have started solving your steps, and then lets take a closer look at the problem step by step and working through the problem. | 1 |
| Thanks for being so engaged, Quinn. Let's work through your approach to this problem to see if it's correct. | 1 |
| Love your enthusiasm, let's work through the problems | 1 (although the tutor is making an assumption that the student is being enthusiastic) |
| break down the basics | 0 |
| Quin can you tell me about your work with punctuation, I am curious why you do this. | 0 |
| I appreciate how motivated you are to solve the issue. To ensure we wrap up, let me to demonstrate the proper method for solving it. | 0 |
| Hi Shelby, I see you are taking your time. Do you want to guide me through your process? | 1 (although it does make an assumption) |
| I see how much time you take, is there anything I clarify? | 1 (assuming the student needs clarification, however, its not necessarily a wrong move, and its based on the fact that they are slow, and not cultural/racial/bias-related reasons) |

EXPLAIN RESPONSES:

Tutor responses need to: tutors should explain the tutor's rationale for their predict response

Correct (1): The tutors response demonstrates that the tutor understands not to make assumptions the research recommended best approach.

Incorrect (0): The tutor responses do not recognize that the tutors understands that they should not make assumptions.

Explain:

| Tutor response: | Rationale |
|--|-----------|
| This approach is effective because it positively acknowledges Quinn's engagement and eagerness to understand, which can boost their confidence and willingness to participate. By offering to work through the questions together, it also ensures that Quinn feels supported and can gain a deeper understanding of the math concepts, rather than just rushing to complete the assignment. | 0? |
| it does not make any assumptions and have any biases | 1 |
| The responses do not make any unconscious assumptions . the rest of the responses show a biased response | 1 |
| Because it is helping the student instead of just giving them the answer. | 0 |
| open communication | 0 |
| This response positively reinforces Quinn's eagerness to ask questions, fostering an environment where inquiry is welcomed and valued. | 0 |