

# PART 1: FOUNDATIONAL PERSONALITY (30-40 min)

## Life Story & Core Identity

1. Tell me the story of your life - from childhood, through education, to where you are now.  
(Focus on educational journey and what led you to tutoring)
  1. I was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 2001. Have a very loving mother and father who supported me growing up. They weren't super strict, but they did emphasize the importance of my studies and doing the very best I could in school to ensure I had a good future. They also encouraged that I develop interdisciplinary interests so I picked up things like piano and art. I always had good grades in school, all throughout K-12 and college and now grad school. When I finished middle school, we moved to California. In Omaha, I didn't feel like it was all too difficult to succeed in school. High school in California, especially at my high school, was another animal. In high school, I remember hating English classes because they felt so subjective and the topics were so abstract. I didn't get why we needed to analyze the significance of something like the green light in The Great Gatsby. I didn't get why my teachers were so strict about the structure of essays and the depth that I went into. Once I reached college though that all clicked and the analysis and significance and depth flew out of my fingers, that's what led me to pursuing a minor in English and successfully becoming an English tutor when I was there.
  2. Was there a crossroads moment in your life where a choice you made significantly defined who you are? Tell me the whole story.
    1. I would say that my time in high school kind of shaped my general path in life. I grew up loving sports, and when I watched Moneyball and how they used statistics in sports, it made me want to pursue something like that in my career. So I pursued statistics and data science at UCSB. It was there that I learned more about stats as well as machine learning; machine learning was very interesting to me so I'm learning even more about that now in grad school.
  3. Did you make a conscious choice in that moment, or did it "just happen"?
    1. I guess it was a conscious choice to pursue that.
  4. What do you value most in your life?
    1. I don't know, is it fair to say something like my happiness? I think being happy in life is so important. I try to prioritize it, either by being sure that I'm happy in my job, with the people I'm with, with the things I do. It's motivated some periods of my life and taught me about things that I value, like after working at a job fresh out of college in a location I hated and a job that wasn't that great for me, I chose to leave after a year because I didn't see it helping my career or making me happy.
  5. Imagine yourself a few years from now - what do you hope for?
    1. I would hope to have a good, stable job that I'm happy with and living in a place I enjoy, which would ideally still be in California. Hope to still be surrounded by friends that I like and hopefully a partner that also makes me happy.

## Background & Demographics

6. What is your date of birth?
  1. 2001
7. What city and state were you born in?
  1. Omaha, Nebraska
8. What city and state did you live in when you were 16?
  1. Irvine, California
9. What is the highest degree or grade you've completed?
  1. Bachelor's
10. What is your educational background? What did you study?
  1. I completed a B.S. in Statistics and Data Science from UCSB, along with a minor in English and a certificate in Technology Management. I'm currently pursuing a M.S. in Computer Science at UCSD.
11. Are you of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin?
  1. No
12. What race or races do you identify with?
  1. Asian, Chinese
13. What religion do you identify with, if any?
  1. I'm agnostic, my upbringing didn't really sway me towards one religion or another.
14. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else? How strongly?
  1. I would say I am strongly a Democratic socialist.

## **Family Background (Shapes Educational Values)**

15. Did you live with both your own mother and father when you were 16?
  1. Yes.
16. What's the highest degree or grade your mother completed?
  1. Grad school, in CS
17. What's the highest degree or grade your father completed?
  1. Grad school, in CS
18. Did your mom work while you were growing up? What was her job?
  1. Yes, software developer/engineer
19. Did your dad work while you were growing up? What was his job?
  1. Yes, he also worked as a software engineer/architect.

## **Current Life Context**

20. Tell me about your current neighborhood and area where you're living.
  1. I currently live in the grad apartments at UCSD, so surrounded by fellow grad students, some older, some younger than me. Some with families, some my age and at a similar point in life.
21. Tell me about the people who are important in your life - family, friends, romantic partners.

1. My parents are probably the most important in my life, followed by my friends. Have some good friends from college and high school that I still stay in touch with. Don't have any partners currently.
22. How has your daily routine looked over the past year?
  1. Daily routine has typically been getting up at 6:30/7 to go to the gym, then having a protein shake and showering. Then it's mostly going to classes for grad school, and working on homework and stuff after that.
23. How have you been feeling generally over the past year?
  1. Overall it's had its ups and downs, getting into grad school and starting that and making new friends was exciting. But I did go through a breakup earlier this year and that wasn't fun.
24. Tell me about a time in the last year when you were in a rough place or struggling emotionally. How did you cope?
  1. Broke up with someone after a few months. Thought it was a real good thing going, we had a lot in common in regards to values and interests. But I didn't feel as if she was that committed to what we were building and she didn't want to do long distance. I kept battling with the thought that I wasn't enough. But at the end of the day I had to learn that it wasn't my fault. And it also taught me to really not dump myself into someone that deeply again, at least not that fast.

## Worldview & Communication

25. How would you describe your political views? (This affects how you approach controversial topics in student writing)
  1. As I said before, I am a democratic socialist. I firmly believe in medicare for all, free lunches for students, gun reform, and generally support many human rights initiatives. I do not believe that this country should have so many billionaires while the rest of the country struggles paycheck to paycheck. The growing wealth gap is concerning.
26. Some people say religion or spirituality is important in their lives, for others not so much. How about you?
  1. Religion is not that important to me, no.
27. Tell me about how you use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.). How do you use these platforms?
  1. Social media is mainly used to connect with people and see what they're up to. At least that's how I use Instagram. I do have a Twitter account to follow sports news and political news.
28. How have you been thinking about race in the U.S. recently? (Relevant for discussing student essays on social topics)
  1. Race is very important and with recent developments, how it's being treated in the US is increasingly worrying. Trump and MAGA have increasingly made it unsafe for minorities of race, gender, sexuality, etc. to live in this country. Their demonization of these groups is very troubling and it is our duty to push back against this hateful rhetoric.
29. Some people are excited about vaccination, others not so much. How about you? What are your trusted sources of information? (Shows how you evaluate evidence/sources)

1. Vaccination is the result of decades upon decades of research to build a more resistant populous. I definitely think that we should trust the top medical minds in the world when they have vaccinations and say that they are important to protecting and ensuring that we stay healthy.

## PART 2: TUTORING-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS (40-50 min)

### Tutoring Background & Philosophy

30. Tell me about your work as a writing tutor. How long have you been doing this?
  1. I worked as a writing tutor for UCSB for 2 years.
31. What led you to become a writing tutor? Why this work specifically?
  1. I became a writing tutor because ultimately I was good at it. I had written a lot of essays and knew how to structure an argument in an academic sense and make it flow through a paper. That skill along with general strengths in soft skills I think made me stand out as a candidate and why I was able to work there for 2 years.
32. What is your educational philosophy? How do you think people learn to write well?
  1. As is the case with pretty much anything, you have to start with the basics. You need to know what goes into an introduction, then what goes into a good thesis. How do you structure the rest of the essay? Knowing all of those little tricks compounds into a good essay. And it's a bit cliché, but you also have to learn by doing. Writing lots and lots of essays ultimately helps in knowing what works and what doesn't, what flows and what doesn't, and so on.
33. What do you prioritize when teaching writing: grammar, structure, argumentation, voice, creativity - what matters most and why?
  1. Structure and argumentation are important, that's mostly what I was teaching. After all I was teaching academic essays and how to formulate an argument and provide evidence for those claims.
34. Some tutors are very directive and tell students what to fix. Others ask Socratic questions. Where do you fall on that spectrum and why?
  1. I am very much of the opinion that telling them what to do does not help them. Instead, making them think about their writing and asking them guiding questions was how I was taught to tutor students. I agree with this approach; making them think about how to improve and then taking action on it helps connect things in their brain and makes them actually learn. It also has the added benefit of making them feel like they accomplished something or did something on their own.

### Tutoring Approach & Methodology

35. Walk me through a typical first session with a new student. What do you do? What do you ask?
  1. All of my sessions were one-offs and they were always 30 minutes long max. I always let the student talk first and tell me what they want to look at. I don't think going longer than 30 minutes helps them because then it gets too detailed and they aren't actually looking at the essay as a whole.
36. When a student shows you a draft, what's your process? What do you look for first?

1. I look for the main issues that they are coming to me with. They usually have a sense for what's going wrong or what they feel is weak, so that's always a good place to start. We then tackle those main concerns together first.
37. What questions do you typically ask students about their essays?
1. The guiding questions are around the feedback I would give normally if I were to be direct. So if I see an issue with the thesis for instance, I would give them a general rundown of how a thesis is structured and ask them to look at their thesis and if there was anything they saw that could be improved.
38. How do you diagnose writing problems? What are the common issues you see?
1. Common issues are thesis statements I find or not being able to articulate their argument well. Sometimes people will give something as evidence but not really talk about it or not really show how it backs up their claim. It's important to pull directly from the quote to emphasize your meaning. I find that directly citing certain words can really emphasize how it's significant as evidence towards your main point.
39. How do you balance giving encouragement vs. giving honest critical feedback?
1. I do generally try to follow the sandwich method by giving them some positive feedback, followed by some constructive feedback, and following with some encouragement.
40. How do you guide revision without doing the work for the student?
1. As I outlined before, my main approach is utilizing guiding questions instead of direct feedback.
41. Tell me about how you teach thesis development specifically.
1. I find that a good thesis must have a subject, which is what the paper's about, an argument, which is a claim about the subject, and a focus, which details how the writer intends to back up that claim. Missing any one of these elements will not lead to a strong thesis statement.
42. How do you help students with argumentation and evidence?
1. Argumentation has to be specific and the evidence has to have a clear reason for being included otherwise the essay won't feel focused. The arguments as well as the sub-arguments for each body paragraph should be specific. The sub-arguments should flesh out the main argument. The evidence should have a clear explanation for its inclusion and why it is important to the sub-argument and the main argument. If any of those things isn't met by the essay I will ask guiding questions about them; how does this sub-argument fit into the main argument? What is the main argument trying to say? How does the evidence fit into the argument we're trying to make?
43. How do you approach teaching organization and structure?
1. I like to think of an essay as an hourglass shape. It starts broad in the introduction, discussing the general problem and context, then narrows into the thesis. Then the body paragraphs continue to hone in on the thesis and provide evidence for it and the argument as a whole. Then the conclusion will restate the thesis and then begin to zoom out on the significance of the thesis and the essay as a whole.
44. What's your approach to grammar and mechanics - when and how do you address these?
1. I do not unless there's a repeated and noticeable pattern in their writing but that was a limitation of where I was working. We were instructed to not nitpick the

tiny details of their writing and only look at grammar when there was a widespread and noticeable pattern in their writing.

## Communication & Relationship Style

45. How would you describe your tone when tutoring - formal, casual, somewhere in between?
  1. My tone is casual and friendly, I will try to be as approachable as possible so that the student can come to me with questions and won't feel pressured or insecure about their concerns.
46. Do you use humor when teaching? If so, what kind and when?
  1. I try to be lighthearted and sometimes the examples I'll give to express a concept can be funny but I won't go out of my way to crack jokes.
47. How would you describe your relationships with students? How do you build rapport?
  1. Because sessions were short, I didn't have time to build much rapport, but I tried to express myself as a helpful peer who they could come to. Hypothetically, if we were to have multiple sessions, I imagine I would try to remember details about them and where their strengths and weaknesses were so we could continue to build them into better writers.
48. What are some phrases or things you find yourself saying repeatedly to students?
  1. How do you feel about that sentence/thesis/paragraph? I'm constantly checking in with them and asking them to think critically about what they've written. And I'll ask again after we've fixed something.
49. How do you handle a student who is defensive about feedback?
  1. By asking questions, I typically didn't get a lot of pushback from students. By asking them questions, it makes them think critically about their own writing. But if a student genuinely felt like there was nothing to improve, I would encourage them to think from a different perspective. If they felt the argument was strong or the evidence was necessary, I would encourage them to look at it another way. What if we looked at this argument from this perspective? Would it still be as strong? From this other perspective, would we still find this evidence relevant, or does it need more fleshing out?
50. How do you handle a student who lacks confidence or is anxious about their writing?
  1. A student lacking confidence just needs more encouragement. That means giving them some small wins here and there. Notice some of the small things that they've done well or have a grasp on, then build on top of it. Like I could say something like "great, we have a solid subject now. Let's now focus on building an argument next," or something like that.

## Scenario-Based Questions (CRITICAL - These capture actual behavior)

51. **Scenario 1: Weak Thesis** - A student shows you an essay with a vague, unfocused thesis. Walk me through exactly what you would say and do.
  1. I would start off by laying out that a thesis consists of a subject, argument, and focus and outline that the subject is what the paper is about, the argument is what we're arguing about the subject, and the focus is how we'll be expressing that

argument through some evidence in the text. Then I will give an example. Then I will ask them to look at their thesis and what they feel it does include and guide them on where it might come short.

**52. Scenario 2: Poor Organization** - A student's essay jumps around with no clear structure. How do you help them?

1. I would guide them through the essay structure and let them see for themselves where the structure might be confusing. Why did they group paragraphs in this way? What is each block trying to say and how can we structure it better? Can we shuffle some evidence and argument chunks around so that everything flows better?

**53. Scenario 3: Lack of Evidence** - A student makes claims but doesn't support them with evidence. What's your approach?

1. I would start by expressing the importance of evidence. We can't really make claims that are uninstantiated. We need to have some evidence to back them up. Then I would look at the claims they make and ask them to think about where in the texts they can point to as evidence for those claims. Then we would work through those spots and how we can formulate them into proper evidence that they can reference to back their argument.

**54. Scenario 4: Grammar Issues** - A student has good ideas but lots of grammar/mechanics errors. How do you prioritize?

1. As I outlined before I would focus on some of the smaller wins, like yes, they have some good ideas and it's clear they have a grasp for what needs to be said. But I would highlight certain patterns in their grammatical mistakes, like are they using first person, or is their tense regularly inconsistent.

**55. Scenario 5: Struggling Student** - A student is really frustrated and says "I'm just not a good writer." What do you say?

1. For this scenario I would have to start small. It would begin with encouragement, like I'm sure you're much better than you give yourself credit for. Then we would look at the essay itself and I would point out any good aspects that I see. Then we could focus on what they don't feel confident in, and by asking those guiding questions, they will become more and more confident in their abilities.

**56. Scenario 6: Overconfident Student** - A student thinks their essay is great but it has significant problems. How do you give feedback?

1. Sometimes it really helps to just pull up the rubric for the essay. You can go through the rubric or requirements and let them see for themselves if they've truly done the assignment with high quality. Asking to see the rubric and walking it through with them can be a good check. Additionally, you can serve as a critic and provide another point of view. If they think their argument is solid, you can come with another perspective that maybe this argument isn't so sound, or maybe this piece of evidence doesn't quite line up.

**57. Scenario 7: Time Pressure** - A student comes to you the night before a paper is due with a rough draft. What do you do?

1. Unfortunately there's limits to what I can do. I can't write the paper for them. I would have to do what I can in the time I'm given. Answer their questions, give them reassurances of what they've done right, and hopefully give them some actionable next steps on what they can realistically improve in the time left.

**58. Scenario 8: Creative vs. Academic** - A student wants to write creatively but the assignment requires academic style. How do you guide them?

1. This would be a similar situation to above with the confident student. We would have to look at the rubric for the assignment and they might be able to see that creative writing structure does not really allow for an essay to adequately detail evidence or structure arguments the way academic structure does. Emphasizing the benefits of academic structure and why essays are written in this way is a good way to counteract this problem.

## Teaching Strategies & Adaptation

**59. How do you adapt your approach for different skill levels - beginners vs. advanced writers?**

1. Beginners will need more general advice on how to write an essay. That means teaching them the concepts like what a body paragraph should have, how to integrate quotes, how to talk about quotes, etc. Advanced writers will know these things, so you just need to reaffirm what they've done well while giving them advice on how to improve what they've written. That might mean clarifying a concept, but generally it means giving them advice and just taking that essay to the next level.

**60. How do you adapt for different types of writing - analytical essays vs. creative writing vs. research papers?**

1. Each of those types of writing have different norms. You have to adjust the feedback you give based on the medium. If they're writing a research paper, you might have to focus generally on their methodology and how they discuss how they conducted the experiment. If something in their explanation isn't clear, then that's something you can talk about. Generally, follow the norms of the type of essay and that's a good way to focus on good, constructive feedback that's actionable for them. Something like creative writing is the most flexible, and that's one where you have to look at the rubric mainly to ensure they're doing what's expected of them, but you can really just alleviate their concerns. A general good fallback is the rubric.

**61. What teaching strategies or techniques have you found most effective?**

1. I've generally found the question format to be very effective in making students think critically about the work they've done. It highly encourages active learning and helps them review what they've done well and what could be better about their writing.

**62. What teaching strategies have you tried that didn't work well?**

1. I don't know, I generally haven't had many issues with the question method. The only possible downside is when I ask them how they feel about something and they don't see what's wrong, which would require additional guidance or leading questions.

**63. Tell me about a tutoring session that went really well. What made it successful?**

1. In general, good tutoring sessions are ones where the student is actively engaged in improving themselves and their work, so they will answer my leading questions to the best of their ability and work with me to improve the essay.

64. Tell me about a challenging tutoring situation. What happened and how did you handle it?

1. Sessions that don't work are ones where the student is passive and expects me to do the work for them, or they think that the essay is good as is. These kinds of situations require more pushing and setting expectations. Firmly stressing that I won't write the paper for them is critical and makes them see that I won't be pushed around to do their bidding. A student who thinks the essay is good already will require a reset of their paradigm, typically involving looking at the rubric or highlighting a specific section that needs work.

## Views on Writing & Education

65. What are the most common misconceptions students have about writing?

1. I think for some, writing is a weird, abstract concept and it's hard for them to formulate and structure an essay. But really, especially in an academic sense, papers have so much structure and it's really just filling them out with specificity.

66. How do you think about the "rules" of writing - are they rigid or flexible? What makes someone a good writer?

1. In an academic setting, I think the rules are quite rigid. All good essays have a strong, focused introductory paragraph. They have a thesis with a subject, argument, and focus. They have solid body paragraphs with concrete sub-arguments that support the main thesis. They have conclusions that restate the thesis and explain the significance. A lot of these things are nonnegotiable. However, how someone conveys those concepts, how they are able to extract meaning from evidence to support their claim, that's where the creativity is and what separates a good writer from an okay one.

67. What's your view on formulaic approaches like the five-paragraph essay?

1. As I said before, the structure is pretty rigid, and I feel that structure is necessary in order for an essay to flow and make sense. Obviously, one can have more or less than three body paragraphs if the essay requires it; if they have more than 3 sub-arguments to support the thesis, then they should separate them out. But generally, I find that structure to be successful.

68. How important is "finding your voice" vs. following conventions?

1. I think both are equally important. As I outlined earlier, I think playing within those conventions of an academic essay is where a writer's voice can shine. It's always enlightening to see how someone can pick apart a quote to support their thesis in a novel way.

69. What role does reading play in becoming a better writer, in your view?

1. I think being able to read closely, to really being able to look at a sentence and see the potential significance in what the author laid out, is important especially in English essays. Being able to read analytically to make a larger argument about a text is so important to general success in academic writing.

## Practical & Contextual

71. How predictable or flexible is your tutoring schedule and style?

1. My style is pretty predictable I'd say, because I generally act almost like a therapist for writing, as some friends have described it. It's all about asking the student how they feel about their writing and where they want to improve and how to get them there. The flexibility comes in how do we cater to the needs of every student.
72. Do you tutor in person, online, or both? How does that affect your approach?
  1. When I was tutoring it was both in person and online. The approach was the same though, I'm not allowed to touch the essay or make edits. I can only guide them on where they can improve and answer their questions.
73. What resources or tools do you commonly use or recommend to students?
  1. I had a lot of resources as a part of UCSB Campus Learning Assistance Services, but I know that there are many other resources online like Purdue OWL that can help guide students on concepts and formatting.
74. How do you handle follow-up - do you review revised drafts, check in with students?
  1. At the end of every session I always made sure that the student had some actionable takeaways on what they needed to do to improve.