

# Going Beyond the Limitations

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*You were born with wings. Why prefer to crawl through life? ---Rumi*

Limitation is a grasping word that can pull one down if allowed. We think we are limited in one thing or another, but the key word is "think." In tutorial sessions, many students come to us looking for answers, fresh ideas and confirmations. Many times they come with a limit already in mind. How do we help these students break the limits they have set for themselves? How do we get them to develop their ideas and not depend on ours? How do we help them make a transition from this dependency into feeling confident in their writing? Furthermore, how do we help them from going beyond the limitations the teacher has set? In the next few paragraphs, I'd like to explain how I feel we can break the limitations.

Donald Stewart says, "Some students become, in high school, very comfortable working in this hothouse environment" (414). By "hothouse environment," he means an environment where "[the] teacher assigns the topics, prescribes the organizational pattern, and, frequently creates an artificial context" (414). It is part of our duty to help students realize that in college, teachers want liveliness. As Stewart also puts it, ". . . voice is the most important. If I don't hear an authentic voice, I'm turned off. . . Nothing is less interesting to read than the dry, lifeless prose of technical report writers...[which] is difficult to read, become interested in, or follow" (414).

We need to get our learners beyond the point of writing for their teachers, and to the point where they can write for themselves while maintaining the teacher's assignment. Anne Gere states "Although they ask it in various ways, one of the students' most frequent questions is: 'What do you want?' They aim to please the teacher and want to make their writing conform to whatever the teacher wants" (401). She continues to explain how students should turn the question around, and find out what they want. We can encourage our learners to do this by challenging them. If we sense an idea is overdone, we can ask if that is truly how they feel. We need to express how important it is to develop our ideas and yet leave room for imagination.

We can help our learners build confidence in their writing by the word choice we use. We have to be very careful to stay within the lines of constructive criticism. However, although we need to stay within these lines, we need not limit ourselves. With creativity, there are many things we can do. Perhaps the most useful is not to offer your ideas. Rather, ask them how they think they can expand an idea. If they say "I don't know," make a mark there, and either come back to it later or tell the learner they'll have to work on it. This will show that they cannot rely on you for answers, but have to work just as hard as you are.

When we are in the booths, and even if we are tired, sick, or maybe even bored, we cannot give in and give the learner the answer. This may be the quick solution at the moment, but will only hurt the learner in the end.

As tutors, our main job is to help our learners expand or fully develop their ideas. We are there to offer our knowledge, and not intrude on the learner's ideas, not to dominate them but rather walk with them in their expansion of ideas. We need to offer our support but let the student know it is **their** paper and hence needs to be **their** ideas.

## Works Cited

Gere, A. "Statement of philosophy." R. Straub & R. F. Lunsford, *12 Readers Reading: Responding to college student writing*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995. 412-414.

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