

# Is Private Tutoring Safe?

Tutoring is a pretty risk-free profession but there are some dangers to yourself, your finances and your clients, all of which you should protect yourself against. The recommendations in this article will help you to do just that.

In comparison to other jobs, such as manual ones, private tutoring is pretty safe. However, because you may be entering strangers' homes or spending time alone with clients, there are risks. And even tutoring online isn't risk free. Scammers are a constant threat. You also have to consider the potential dangers you may pose to your students – believe me, even the most innocent person can be a danger by causing accidents. So what exactly are the dangers and how can you protect yourself? This article explains...

## What are the dangers to a tutor's personal safety?

Firstly, I must stress that private tutors are extremely unlikely to be put in any danger. Having said that, when you meet a client for the first time, you should be on your guard. Before you do that I advise that you meet them beforehand. Do this in a public place and make sure somebody knows where you are going and who you are meeting. This is your chance to evaluate the client. We can usually pick up signs that "something isn't right" from cues such as body language. Trust your instinct and if you feel uncomfortable then make your excuses and leave.

If you do arrange to work for someone as a tutor then the riskiest situation is visiting their home for the first time. Again, the chances of you being put in any danger are slim, but you should still be on your guard. Before you go, tell somebody you trust where you are going and who you are meeting. When you get to the house study your surroundings and plan your exit – it's a remote possibility but if you do need to get out fast then you'll need to know the route.

Tutoring in your own home is a much safer prospect. Firstly, you can choose who to admit so anybody you feel threatened by can be refused entry. Your clients will be children for the most part so less dangerous than adults. Having said that there have been cases of children attacking their teachers, sometimes armed with a knife or other weapon. These are extremely rare indeed but something you should be aware of.

## What are the online dangers of being a tutor?

The dangers of online tuition pose a threat to your finances rather than your personal safety. The internet is a hunting ground for fraudsters so make sure you do all you can to protect yourself.

Identity theft is a real problem. The best way to avoid this is to not share personal information online. Unfortunately, to promote your business you may need to publish your name and your contact details. My advice is to show only the minimum, i.e. your name, the area you cover and your mobile phone number. Under no circumstances give out any personal information (your address, date of birth etc.) to anybody you do not already know.

Another thing you should guard yourself against is false enquiries. One common scam is for a fraudster to claim they want to pay you in advance. Posing as a potential client they say they want to book several lessons and need your bank account details in order to transfer the money. NEVER give your bank details to anybody you do not know. And even then, they only need your account number and sort code to transfer money.

Fraudsters might also use cheques to trick you. They could send a cheque worth thousands of pounds which covers several months of tuition. Then they will get in touch asking for a refund as they have to cancel the lessons. However, the cheque they sent you is worthless so any money you do pay will leave you out of pocket.

## What does a tutor have to do to ensure child safety?

Now we come to protecting your clients from you. You may think you pose no threat whatsoever to children but you would be wrong. If a child comes to your house and then has an accident, then legally it is you who is responsible. Parents in these circumstances may take you to court for compensation. You can protect yourself from this with public liability insurance, so be sure to check that out.

Parents who are not happy with the service you provide might make a claim of malpractice against you. If a child does not get the results parents expect then the tutor could be blamed (less likely this one, but still something to be aware of). Professional indemnity insurance will protect you from this.

There's one more thing which I recommend you do regarding child safety – have a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. This will prove to potential clients that you do not have a criminal record and that there is no known reason you cannot safely work with children. This is not a legal requirement but you may find it hard to get any clients without a DBS certificate.

So there you have it. Tutoring is a pretty safe profession but there are dangers which you should protect yourself against. The recommendations in this article will help you to do just that.