

NSW Public Schools

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# SCHOOL parents

Helping Mums and Dads with school life

## THE FACTS ON TUTORS

**Whether it be face-to-face, computer-based, in the home or at a coaching college, it seems private tutoring is a growing business. It is also an area where a lot of parents—thinking they are doing the best thing for their child— are actually vulnerable to bogus offers and false and misleading advertising. If you're considering tutoring, find out how to get the best service for you and your child.**

It's important to know that your child's school will ensure your child's educational needs are met in line with the curriculum. Teachers in public schools are university educated and use effective teaching techniques. If at any time you have concerns about your child's education, you should discuss it with your child's teacher, year advisor or principal, as appropriate.

However, if you are thinking of hiring a tutor, Mohan Dhall, Chief Executive Officer of the [Australian Tutoring Association](#), believes that the right tutor can complement the education provided by schools when "they instil confidence in the student and work in partnership with schools".

Mohan says parents "should think first whether their child would benefit from tuition. After all, a well structured home environment may provide the best framework for parents to help children themselves if it is required.

"If however a parent, with support from the school, has identified an area or areas that could benefit from extra academic attention or intervention, then parents need to be very clear about what they want the tuition to achieve. In this way they can be very selective about the kind of tuition they may seek. They should also see how the tuition can work best with the child's school to achieve the best outcomes for the child."

Consumer concerns about the tutoring industry led to the formation of the Australian Tutoring Association, which aims to raise the standard of tutoring in Australia, as all members must follow the Association's [Code of Conduct](#). The Association now has 6,000 tutors nationally. You can contact the Association on 02 9704 5724.

The [Australian Tutoring Association](#) and the [NSW Office of Fair Trading](#) have worked together to develop some questions you might want to ask to find the right service for you and your child,

such as:

- How long has your tutoring service been in business?
- Does the service belong to a relevant industry association with an enforceable code of conduct, e.g. the Australian Tutoring Association?
- Can you give me the name of any other parents to talk to about the quality of your tutoring services?
- Have the tutors been interviewed face-to-face by the tutoring service?
- What qualifications and experience does the tutor have?
- Are the tutors trained specifically in the subject area in which they are tutoring?
- Is the form of proposed tutoring relevant to the NSW Education course requirements?
- Have reference checks been conducted on the tutors?
- Have relevant child protection screenings been performed on the tutors?

Mohan suggests that parents "should look for a tutor who communicates effectively, is warm and empathic, is open, honest and accountable.

"Tutors who can understand education and educational processes, can break down complex concepts and build up understanding through [scaffolding](#)—these are the features of effective tutors. They will be subject matter experts who assist students to acquire the skills and confidence they need to help themselves."

Unfortunately the NSW Office of Fair Trading has been contacted by many families who have complaints about tutoring services, related to refunds, cancellations, fees and unsatisfactory service.

NSW Fair Trading suggests parents "should exercise caution with overseas or interstate institutions promoting their services on the internet and they should read any contract carefully before signing and be aware of any cancellation conditions".

They also caution parents to "ask how 'guarantees' of success can be substantiated and be careful of companies that rely on web-based communication and don't offer telephone numbers or office locations".

Parents who are experiencing problems with tutoring services can contact the [Office of Fair Trading](#) on 13 32 20. There is also a [fact sheet](#) ([Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Hindi](#), [Korean](#) and [Vietnamese](#)) to guide you in your choice of, and dealings with, tutors.

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