The Tutoring Cycle-Observation Form (Adapted from Ross MacDonald, Tutor Evaluation and Self-Assessment Tool)

This cycle can be adapted for all subjects, and for group and individual tutoring. Use this form to guide your own tutoring sessions.

Step 1: Greeting
a. Greet student by name.
b. Display friendliness-smile, gesture, small talk, etc.
c. Provide efficient seating arrangements (next to, not across from each other.)
d. Encourage student to initiate the first task: to open books and notes, etc.

Step 2: Identifying Task
a. Provide opportunity for student to take control and determine focus of session.
b. Use questions to clarify students' immediate concerns. ("What is the hardest part for you?")
c. Restate students' problems to help student understand what was needed and to focus activities for session. If you need to refocus session, explain why.
d. Use empathetic statements to help student(s) define the problem ("That part can be hard.")

Step 3: Setting Agenda
a. Involve student in setting the agenda (i.e. "We have ____ minutes today. How should we use them?" "What should we work on today?")
b. Require student to state agenda explicitly to help him/her play active role in allocating time on each task. Jot down an informal plan for the session.
c. Readjust agenda when necessary, keep track of time.

Step 4: Breaking Task into Parts
a. Ask student to break task or problems into steps. ("Show me how you did this in class;" "How do you begin?")
b. Restate steps mentioned. Have the tutee take notes, if appropriate.
c. Ask student(s) to explain the steps to confirm understanding ("OK, so now you tell me what we have to do for this kind of problem")

Step 5: Identifying Thought Process Involved in Task
a. Ask the student to explain the general approach learned in class for this type of problem/concept/thought process.
b. Help student understand the textbook/lecture notes and how these resources were used to understand the process.
c. Help student understand other sources of information (i.e. notes, handouts, workbooks, classmates, etc.) for solving problems. Tutor should not be only source of information.
d. Ask student to explain the approach learned to ensure his/her understanding for doing similar tasks when studying alone.

Step 6: Addressing Task
a. Encourage student to address task without overly directing him/her (i.e. "Where should we begin? What do we do next?")
b. Respond appropriately, but do not interrupt students' thinking. Show attention without taking over. Pencil and paper should remain in front of student, not tutor.
c. Encourage student(s) to do most of the talking/learning. Did not over explain or take control.
d. Allow sufficient time ("10 Second Rule") for tutee to do, act, speak, or learn before you take over and explain.

Step 7: Student Summary of Content
a. Encourage student to summarize what has just been learned (i.e. "OK, let's review for a minute. Show me what we just talked about.")
b. Wait for student's explanation to run its course without interrupting or correcting. Give student opportunity to self-correct by asking questions, then waiting.
c. Use student's explanations to determine if he or she really understands.
d. If understanding is incomplete, return to addressing the task.

Step 8: Student Summary of Process
a. Have student summarize process for addressing the task ("So, how do you do this again?")
b. Wait for student summary to run its course.
c. Determine if student's understanding would allow the completion of similar task independent of tutoring.
d. If understanding is incomplete, return to addressing the task.

Step 9: Confirming and Reinforcing Confidence
a. After student explains content and process, offer positive reinforcement, and confirm that student really did understand or improve.
b. Congratulate student for working hard and not giving up.
c. Reassure student that he/she can now do similar tasks independently.

Step 10: Looking Ahead
a. Help student anticipate what he/she will learn next that might connect to current task.
b. Help student understand how information from class, tutoring, and resources is connected.
c. Ask future-oriented questions like "What is the next concept you will learn in class? How will what we did today help you?"

Step 11: Planning next session
a. Look at class schedule together. Allow student to make decision about whether to return for another session and what to do during the session (i.e. "Should we meet next week? What should we do? What will you have done to prepare before the session?")
b. Confirm time and date of next session as applicable.

Step 12: Evaluating Session/Closing
a. Evaluate progress on agenda (i.e. "We got a lot done," or "We got off track.") Ask what helped most and what could be improved
b. Thank student for contributions (i.e. "You really came prepared. That helped.") If necessary, make suggestions for next time ("Be sure to come prepared, bring your books, read the chapter, and do your homework for the next session!")
c. End session on a positive note ("You made a lot of progress!") or "Even though we got off track, we learned what to do for next time.")