

is only a drop in the ocean. On the other hand, the bad teachers are poor performers who are not knowledgeable and in order to cover up their weaknesses, they pretend to be strong at the subject. These kinds of teachers always blame their students for not concentrating in the class. It is like a weak tradesman who always blames his tools and never admits his weak workmanship. A friendly teacher is always amenable, adjustable and empathizes with their students and narrows down the gap between faculty and students thereby developing relations. Such a teacher is always accessible to the students for clarifying their doubts.

On the other hand, a hostile teacher is inimical and their action towards their students are reactive rather than proactive. They display an unfriendly and irritating attitude when they hear from their students that other teachers are teaching better than them. Hostile teachers don't take criticism constructively & positively in their stride.

The jovial teachers are replete with fun and humour. They entertain students with lots of humorous jokes & anecdotes and they believe in imparting education in an entertaining manner. They do not get provoked and take the comments from the students jovially. While teaching, this kind of teacher believes in the carrot but not the stick policy.

On the other hand, the strict teachers are, no doubt, good teachers but they believe in stick rather than carrot in the method of teaching. They expect the class to be totally silent and they do not encourage their students to discuss on the topic among themselves. This kind of teacher is highly knowledgeable & uncompromising.

The dominant teachers are again a kind of strict teacher but the degree of strictness is higher and hence can also be called dictatorial or autocratic teachers. They hardly bother about the sentiments, views & opinions of their students. On the contrary, the submissive teachers are those who always succumb to the demands of their students and they do not know how to control their students. Both these types are unwarranted & uncalled for and what is expected is the average of these two traits which can be called assertive teachers who strike a fine chord between dominant & submissive teachers.

The best teachers teach from heart, not from the book. An assertive teacher is the best teacher and

an ideal teacher who teaches from their heart. The serious teachers are by nature serious in their approach and they teach without adding any touch of humor but they are very efficient and effective and believe in professional approach. The students learn the topics in a professional manner. For this kind of teacher work is worship. They always mean business. On the contrary, the casual teachers take everything lightly but not seriously and may not be stuffed with adequate knowledge and believe in completing the syllabus and passing their time. This kind of teacher work for the sake of working and they never win the hearts of their students.

There are three things to remember when teaching; know your stuff, know whom you are stuffing; and then stuff them elegantly.

Anyone can become a good teacher if equipped with certain qualities & characteristics. A teacher wears many a hat such as, they should be an effective leader, communicator, disciplinarian, mentor, guide, parent, friend, philosopher, motivator, counselor, actor, a role model, well wisher, manager, fair and impartial. They should not take the things for granted. They should concentrate on all students equally but rather more on the weak or dull students who needs little more care & attention. Should carry all the students along with them as a team leader.

A teacher should be thorough and well versed with the subjective knowledge & should add outside information along with the topics relevantly whenever warranted. Should have higher levels of energy & enthusiasm. Should remember the names of all the students in the class. Should always work with sincerity and integrity. Should know how to present the topic based on common sense.

A great teacher teaches but also inspires, motivates and changes the mindsets of their students. They work with heart and head, as both are essential for effective teaching. A great teacher never demands but always commands respect from their students. They are not only a teacher but also a great listener and learner. They teach what they know to their students and learn from what the students know. **Egotism is not the quality of a great teacher.** This teacher concentrates more on weak students rather than on bright students as Mara Collins said, "**The great teacher makes the poor student good & the good student superior**". A great teacher always sees

the big picture. Whenever they find that the topic is tough they break it into several small pieces and explain these pieces effectively & efficiently to the students and gradually assembles back the pieces into a one single entity.

Great teachers are voracious readers of various books, magazines, journals, browser of many educational websites and are good observers. They are like a gardener who plants seeds, waters them and feels satisfied when it starts blooming. They know the psychology of their students. They are highly creative, and are dreamers. They raise the expectations and aspirations of their students.

They lay stress not only on education but also on **ethical values & character building**. They are involved in character building & spiritual literacy. Spirituality is about meaning, inspiration & wisdom. It is about a deeper sense of purpose & place. It is about connectedness and the highest aspirations of the human spirit.

Being spiritually illiterate leads to feelings of purposelessness, disconnection, isolation & loneliness in the classroom, then in the world.

**If students are found to be not tuned or going off track they should be criticized privately.**

**On the other hand, if any student does anything miraculous they must be praised publicly in the class.** Such acts serve as positive strokes to make the rest of the students want to catch up with such a positive trend.

The Prophet (p) said:  
**"Teachers who have three students – of different social classes – and do NOT treat them equally, will be in the line of the traitors on Judgment Day."**

# THE GREAT TEACHER

Great teaching **cannot be reduced to technique** but is rooted in the identity & integrity of the teacher. Such teaching takes myriad forms but great teachers share one trait: they are authentically present in the classroom, in community with their students & their subject. They possess "a capacity for connectedness" & are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subjects, and their students, helping their students weave a world for themselves. The connections made by great teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts — the place where intellect, emotion, spirit, and will converge in the human self — supported by the community that emerges among them when they choose to live authentic lives. The difference between a **strong teacher** & a **weak teacher** lasts a lifetime. So let's examine the different types of teachers.

**The mediocre teacher tells.**

The good teacher explains.

The superior teacher demonstrates.

**The great Teacher inspires.**

Such a teacher is like a candle – it consumes itself to light the way for others. Alexander the Great said: "I am indebted to my father for living, but to my teacher for living well".

The **quality** of the teachers in our schools is paramount: no other measured aspect of schools is nearly as important in determining student achievement.

## More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching & the spirit in which the teaching is given.

Islam has paid considerable attention to teachers for their being the first brick in the structure of social development & perfection & the cause of guiding & developing behaviours & mentalities of individuals & communities. The Prophet (p) cared for teachers & spoke of their elevated standings. Once, he passed by two circles of people; the first was supplicating to God while the other was listening to a teacher. He commented, “The first is begging God who may or may not give them. The second is learning. **I have been sent as a teacher.**” Hence, he joined the second.

Al-Khwarizmi (780-850), Ibn Sina (980-1037), Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and others like them were not just outstanding Muslim scholars, they were extraordinary teachers as well.

It is teachers who form the backbone of society. If we want to make our mark in this world, we need to develop outstanding teachers. That requires that we understand the qualities of the great teacher who can transform the lives of students.

A great teacher knows that students are unable to comprehend everything taught. Their lectures contain content beyond the grasp of even the smartest kids. But they know that such content can fire the imagination. Such a teacher has not only passion for the subject, they also have the skills to move fluently between disciplines, to give examples from literature when teaching math, or poetry when teaching physics. For them, **cross-pollination of ideas is crucial** in making their content come alive. They can make connections. The possibility of serendipity propels them.

This teacher knows that their teaching is more about students than about them, but while they are not ‘the sage on the stage,’ neither are they

a mere ‘guide by the side.’ Whatever it takes to stretch the minds of students, they do. If it means going against the conventional order of content, so be it. If it means touching lightly on a tangential topic, with fuller explanations to come later or maybe never, that’s the way it is. The transformational teacher is non-linear rather than linear.

A memorable teacher never relies on their reputation, however exalted it may be, for they know that **they have to earn their wings every time they enter a classroom.** Each class is a fresh start, even if they have been teaching that class for decades. They have abiding respect for their students, & they prepare their lectures carefully, seeking new angles to old materials.

The great teacher takes to heart what the English historian Edward Gibbon said: “The power of instruction is seldom of much efficacy except in those happy dispositions where it is almost superfluous.” In other words, after listening to such a teacher, a student feels as if the content is the most natural & logical thing in the world & that they knew it all along.

**This rare teacher is serious without being solemn.** There is an element of playfulness in their teaching & in the way they use humour to leaven formulas & formalism & most importantly, to put their students at ease so they can use the full power of their minds. Under their guidance, students find the inner resources to ask deep questions & learn on their own.

“Education **is not the filling of a pail,**” said the poet William Butler Yeats, “**but the lighting of a fire.**” Students lucky enough to come in contact with a great teacher know exactly what Yeats meant. They develop new ways of seeing & thinking. They are open to surprises. They discover a more wondrous world beyond their smart gadgets. After graduation, they are more likely to solve problems that will make a difference in people’s lives than becoming rich through a corporate job or by managing other people’s money.

The great teacher **rejects** teaching fads seasonally served up by ‘experts’ who have never set foot in a class. Teaching to the test or teaching to the core or teaching to this or to that are meaningless phrases for them. They ignore fads & the buzzwords

because they study their students meticulously & intuitively & so know how to put the spark in their minds, how to kindle their creativity & sense of wonder. Even with the inroads technology has made into education & all the ‘big data’ analysis of ‘effective teaching methodologies,’ they know that **teaching will remain an art & not a science.**

An extraordinary teacher is also a radical, a revolutionary. They shake things up. They challenge students to question accepted theories. They encourage them to cross intellectual boundaries. They disturb their universe. They mix relevance with danger. They are tough without being trying, supportive without being sentimental. Their expectations are high, just as their tolerance for shoddy work is low. Their greatest pleasure is in seeing students embark on intellectual journeys on their own. Their focus is not exactly on knowledge – that can bud later – but on enduring curiosity. Because **passivity is the killer of intellectual inquiry,** they pepper students with questions & then demand being peppered with questions. They help them reinvent themselves as they discover the hidden treasures of their minds. They show the sky to students trapped in the bottom of a well.

Such teachers take a more active role in shaping the temporal experiences of the students in their courses; that in the process of designing a syllabus they need not only select readings, choose topics, and organize the sequence of material, but also engineer, in a conscientious and explicit way, the pace and tempo of the learning experiences. When will students work quickly/slowly? When will they be expected to offer spontaneous responses/be expected to spend time in deeper contemplation? Great teachers focus on the slow end of this tempo spectrum, on creating opportunities for students to engage in deceleration, patience & immersive attention. These are the kind of practices that now most need to be actively engineered by faculty. Every external pressure, social & technological, is pushing students in the other direction, toward immediacy, rapidity, & spontaneity — and against this other kind of opportunity. Students are given the permission & the structures to slow down.

A great teacher removes the fear of failure from their students. They inspire them to try things out as a beginner because that is the key to unlocking creativity. Whatever emotions a student may experience in their class, **boredom is not one of them.** Disturbed, agitated, uncertain, falling off the cliff maybe, but dull? Never!

Everyone should have experienced a transformational teacher, someone who can light a fire and reveal a universe. For those lucky students for whom it does, they should spread the word so that other well-meaning teachers can learn from them and emulate them. No amount of ‘educational reform to prepare our students for the 21st century’ sloganeering will make a dent in a broken educational system. **For the truly dedicated, teaching is a calling and it is these few who can show the rest the way.**

Teachers can be classified in various types; such as good teacher versus bad teacher, friendly teacher versus hostile teacher, jovial teacher versus strict teacher, dominant teacher versus submissive teacher, serious teacher versus casual teacher.

One student said she could not describe her good teachers because they are all different. But she could describe her bad teachers because they were all the same. “Their words float somewhere in front of their faces, like the balloon speech in cartoons.”

Face to face with students only ONE resource is at a teacher’s immediate command: Their identity, their selfhood, their sense of this “I” who teaches; without which they have no sense of the “Thou” who learns. Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity & integrity of the teacher. Good teachers are those who know how little they know, bad teachers are those who think they know more than they don’t know. The good teachers never boast nor boast of themselves too much. However knowledgeable they might be, they think and declare that whatever they know

**Knowledge is not the abundance of narration. It is an illumination that God casts in minds**

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