

The Top 14 Qualities that Make a Good Teacher

You don't need to have a specific personality type to be an inspiring and effective teacher. However, there are some useful traits you should work on developing or strengthening if your goal is to be a more engaging and successful educator.

1. Adaptability

Adaptability is a must for teachers, who need to continuously evaluate what's working for their students – and even more importantly, what isn't working. Being adaptable and flexible allows you to flow between different theories of learning and modes of teaching – something we'll discuss momentarily – without becoming immobilized by stress or indecision.

2. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand what another person is feeling or experiencing – put simply, putting yourself in another person's shoes. As a teacher, it's vital to practice empathy instead of making assumptions – for instance, making efforts to understand and address the root issue that's causing a student to fall behind their peers, perform more poorly than they used to, or lash out in class.

3. Patience

Patience is important both to possess and to model for your students – who, as we discussed in our post on theories of learning, may view you as a role model and emulate your behavior. Having a reserve of patience will make it easier for you to work through each student's unique struggles and challenges, which may be difficult or slow-going to overcome.

4. Engagement

Students are perceptive from an extremely young age and can easily tell when teachers are bored by or apathetic toward their own material. If you want to generate engagement and enthusiasm in your class, it's imperative to exemplify those traits yourself, showing your students an infectious passion for learning – and all the exciting discoveries and hobbies that it can unlock for them!

5. Active Listening

Active listening is vital if you want to effectively diagnose and help overcome students' unique obstacles and challenges. Seek feedback, encourage honesty, provide ways for students to contact you easily, and be attentive whenever you listen, always trying to read between the lines and assess body language while you're communicating. Learn more about how and why you should [improve your active listening skills](#).

6. Lifelong Learning

The best educators aren't just interested in teaching – they also have a passion for lifelong learning, which is reflected in their enthusiasm and engagement as instructors. Continued learning and professional development deliver invaluable insight, keeping professionals “sharp” and reminding teachers of the real-world challenges that their students may be facing – creating a pathway for greater empathy. Discover more about [the importance of lifelong learning](#) and how different theories of learning could help you teach – or understand – new information.

7. Free of Bias

As an educator, you'll be responsible for teaching an extraordinarily wide range of students. To combat inequality and discrimination and ensure fairness, you need to assess your students' needs in a way that is free from bias – something that requires you to continuously check in with your own judgments and assumptions about others.

8. Respectful Attitude

Even in classrooms of adult learners, there's still an inherent imbalance of power that exists between students and teachers. It's imperative for educators to be mindful of this imbalance and ensure that students feel respected and heard for the people they are and what they contribute to the classroom.

9. Creativity

Creativity goes hand in hand with adaptability – another key trait we explored on this list. Whether you teach first graders or doctoral students, you'll need the ability to innovate, think outside the box, and find novel solutions to challenges, which will empower you to meet a wider range of students' needs. Being creative as an educator will also help you to foster creativity in your students – an essential skill they'll need for countless career paths.

10. Collaborative

From parent-teacher conferences and department meetings to teaching dozens or hundreds of students every day, education is an intensely collaborative field by nature, involving a constant interplay between students, teachers, administrators, and family members. If your goal is to become an educator or transition into an educational leadership position, you'll need strong collaborative skills to ensure you can work well with others consistently.

11. Preparation

In line with being flexible and adaptable, it's important to be prepared for a wide range of scenarios and challenges in the classroom. You can increase your overall level of preparedness as an educator by learning about your students' strengths and challenges, and ensuring that you consider how each of your students could be affected by your lesson plans.

12. Promote a Growth Mindset

In 2006, psychologist Carol Dweck introduced the concept of “growth mindsets” vs. “fixed mindsets” in her book *Mindset: The Psychology of Success*. According to Dweck, individuals with a fixed mindset perceive assets like intelligence as being determined early in life, which can cause obstacles or challenges to seem insurmountable or overwhelming. In contrast to a fixed mindset, individuals who have a growth mindset believe that traits like intelligence and creativity can be developed with practice.

13. Meet Students Where They Are

Your students will come to you from different backgrounds, skill sets, and challenges – and you need to be ready to meet them, whichever point they've reached in their learning. That means having the ability to accommodate students who learn at different paces, using different styles and methods, within the same classroom or group. This is another area where traits like adaptability, empathy, and patience come into play for educators.

14. Cross-Discipline Teaching

Drawing on multiple subjects and disciplines shows students how businesses operate – and how problem-solving works – in the real world, grounding their learning in practical real-life scenarios.

If you don't possess all of these traits already, don't panic — just be mindful that there may be some areas where you could benefit from a little practice. Whether your goal is to tune up weak skills, refine strong ones, or develop new abilities, a degree or credential program provides the perfect opportunity to acquire the qualifications and experience you need to go further in your chosen career path.