

In order to find what makes a good teacher, I set out to ask these four questions to some of my close friends and evaluated their answers. For transparency's sake, I somehow managed to get answers from four white and mostly cis men, though they vary regionally and with age. You can find the full questions and results of my interview [here](#).

According to my friends Sam, Logan, Stephan, and Matt, a good teacher is enthusiastic, with genuine love for the subject they teach; patient, even with unruly students; creative and supportive, with more interest to guide students than process grades; challenging, and respectful. It's not always easy to tell if they are good teachers in the moment, you may not realize until later reflection. My older interviewees admitted that their idea of a good teacher differed from what they thought as children, and that they would seek out different teachers than their younger selves. However, my youngest participant (in his early 20s) was confident in his skills to assess his teachers in the past and present, and based his requirements on camaraderie. Rather than attributing this last participant to hubris, I think more about the change of teachers across the decades and how school and education itself used to be a very different system than the one we live in today. In one such way, the youngest interviewee was concerned about being treated like an adult, while one of my older interviewees mentioned physical violence in his memories of bad teachers, which is much more dire. Both would be severely detrimental to the growth of the student.

For me, this was a great experiment and experience. I am very happy to have had a broad range of stories from my friends, who took this very seriously and answered with honesty and integrity. I totally agree with all of them and the picture that they painted together of a good teacher – enthusiastic, patient, creative and supportive, challenging and respectful. I think those are great pillars, and even include “knowledgeable” under that enthusiastic umbrella, which you, Chris, pointed out on our first day, when we made our map out of single-word descriptions of a good teacher. I'm very happy with my interviewees' responses, as they truly encompassed a lot of the thoughts I was having about being a teacher and what being a good one meant.

I found that most interviewees were caught up on my second question, “Were your favorite teachers also good at teaching?” which gave them a chance to evaluate those favorite teachers on an imaginary scale, and all of the participants, except for one, refused to. In my personal opinion, it would be easy to tell if a teacher was good at teaching, and I would make no biases for my favorites either because of who I am as a person. I love learning and I love teaching, so my favorite teachers would also be a fantastic teacher with exceptional teaching skills, and I have no doubt about that.

I also found myself on the side of the youngest interviewee in my last question, comparing whether I was as good at picking teachers as a child as I am now. I do not think my values have changed so much from when I was a child, but I do agree with Logan’s perspective: “I’ve grown and more accurately identified the situations in which I am able to thrive.” I know lesson planning and classroom management much better now, and that those are important things for teachers to not just manage, but master, as well as how essential tiering lesson plans can be, and the flow of learning.

Overall, I am extremely pleased with these responses and mostly emotionally touched by my friends’ openness and willingness to part with this information to me. It really rehashed an idea that I was already aware of, but through the lens of people important to me – how incredibly foundational a teacher can be to an entire person’s identity, let alone their relationship with education.