Dear Students:

This is a chain letter. I hope that someone passes this letter on to you so that these ideas can help you as much as they did me.

Most teachers are trying hard to find new and better ways to motivate and teach us, the student. A few, on the other hand, have given up—these are the ones who think that we’re not going to learn or at least we don’t act as if we will, which makes the classroom a dull, hopeless place—for them as well as for us.

Why not turn this around? Why not help make all of your teachers happy to be alive and vibrant with enthusiasm? You’ll benefit! Here’s how:

**UPON ENTERING THE CLASSROOM:**

Look like a student—have **visible** textbooks, notebooks, pens and pencils. And don’t sit too far back in the room.

**Be ready to start on time.** When the class starts and the instructor arrives, put away the newspaper and end your extracurricular conversations. Get rid of gum, soft drinks, and potato chips.

If you must enter the class late, make an acceptable entrance. At least run a few steps in the hall so you can come in huffing and puffing. Smile in an apologetic way and take the nearest empty seat, quietly. Don’t cross right in front of your teacher. Lay low the rest of the period. Try not to repeat the offense.

**DURING THE CLASS YOU SHOULD:**

Try to keep your eyes fully on the teacher’s eyes. When the teacher looks back and establishes eye contact, smile and nod your head. Do it **all the time** except when taking notes.

At least once during the class, ask the teacher to please repeat a point again. When the teacher does this, say, "Thank you, that helps me a lot" (or some similar phrase).

Ask the teacher a question. The question should be about what is being presented. You should then thank the instructor, but if he (or she) is the sort who responds to the questions with "What do you think?" make sure you have some answer ready. Don’t say, "I asked you first!"
If you know the answers to questions, raise your hand. Teachers love to see those eager responders. If you get called on and really don’t know the answer, be honest and say so. Don’t try to be funny about it.

Try to look like you know the answer even when you don’t raise your hand. Give the impression that you’re allowing the others their chance to score and you don’t want to hog all the credit.

If the instructor tells a joke, try to give some kind of a polite laugh or chuckle. Any attempt at levity is a brave effort by the teacher in what may be a grim situation and should be reinforced.

**ENDING THE CLASS:**

Don’t shuffle and start putting away your notebook and pencil while the instructor is still talking.

If the instructor did a good job, give him (or her) a round of applause. You’ve applauded dull comedians, boring commencement speakers, and amateur rock groups—why not make someone feel good who’s much closer to you and is in a position to do something nice for you on every quiz, exam, transcript and letter of recommendation?

When you leave say something nice to the teacher. If you can’t honestly compliment the class presentation just say you’re “looking forward to the next class” (and hoping it will be better, but don’t say that).

When you’ve been absent, attempt to make it up. If you were absent from a previous class meeting, ask if you should come by the instructor’s office for help on making it up. Never, never smirk and say, “Did I miss anything important?” (You sure did: a chance to be tactful.)

Please note that nowhere in this letter is there anything about studying more or learning more—that’s obvious! The real problem is that we often inadvertently give the impression to our teachers that we don’t care about the class or even that we dislike them. That kind of misunderstanding doesn’t help anyone.

Just try these methods for a single semester—trust me. Remember if you make just one teacher happy (even if it’s for a few magic moments) it will be worthwhile. Education needs every bit of help it can get—it’s up to us, isn’t it?

Sincerely,

A Fellow Student