

What Is Your Teaching Philosophy? What Teachers Need to Know to Answer This Question!

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Whether you're a newly qualified teacher (NQT) or an experienced educator, interviews are a daunting prospect. You may know your job inside out and arrive at your appointed time prepared to answer any question – or so you thought. There's always one tricky question that seems designed to catch you out. Many people are thrown by questions such as, "What is your teaching philosophy?" They seem abstract and far removed from daily life in the classroom. As such, it's hard to provide an impressive answer when you don't understand the question. Take a breath and try to consider what the interviewer is really trying to find out. Chances are that the right answer is a lot simpler than the wording of the question suggests. We've put together some information using the results of Teacher Tapp surveys to help you consider

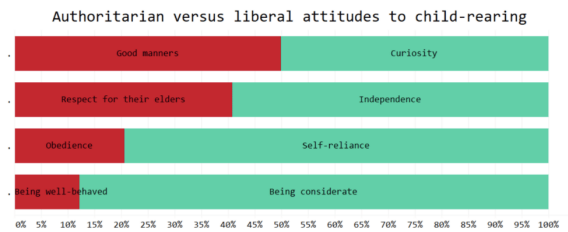
your teaching philosophy. Not planning on attending an interview any time soon? Taking time to step back and reflect on your teaching style and why you do what you do, as well as identify potential areas of improvement, is a valuable exercise for all teachers. So what do teachers need to know about teaching philosophy and why is it important?

What Exactly Is Teaching Philosophy?

There are many different teaching philosophies, including essentialism, progressivism, constructivism and humanism, to name just a few. There's a good chance you studied some of these during your teaching degree and training. However, when an interviewer asks this question, they are not necessarily seeking a weighty academic answer. What the interviewer is really asking you to demonstrate is that you have a set of core values and beliefs that underpin your approach to teaching. They want to know that you can articulate your philosophy and that it aligns with the school's values. Simply regurgitating academic theory on your chosen teaching philosophy is unlikely to impress. When you answer this question, you should take into consideration different schools of philosophical thought as well as your own personal experiences and beliefs. Your teaching philosophy will be unique to you, not an off-the-peg theory you simply buy in to. [Why did you become a teacher?](#) What makes you proud about being part of the teaching profession? What factors do you evaluate when reflecting on your performance? What does great teaching mean to you? Not sure where to start? We surveyed thousands of teachers about their teaching philosophy and the results may provide some insights to help you reflect on your own approach to teaching.

Authoritarian vs Liberals

In an earlier Teacher Tapp survey, we asked teachers if they subscribed to a "traditionalist" or a "progressive" teaching philosophy. To calibrate these results (people's beliefs may not always match their actual behaviour) we used the four-question survey used by psychologists to determine if parents are "authoritarian" or "liberal". Authoritarians tend to see the world as black and white. They favour hierarchy, loyalty and strong leadership. Liberals, on the other hand, prize fairness and autonomy. Often, teachers will not fall neatly into one camp or the other, but there is generally an attitude that dominates thoughts, beliefs and behaviours. You may think you live by one philosophy, but when you start reflecting on your actions and opinions on a variety of topics related to teaching, you may realise that you have strong tendencies in the other direction. An individual's personal philosophy in life may differ from their teaching philosophy. The four questions we asked Teacher Tappers required them to choose which characteristics and behaviours they thought were the "most important" when raising children. The vast majority of teachers chose "being considerate" over "being well-



The answers given in the Teacher Tapp survey showed that those who identified as “traditional” gave more “authoritarian” responses and those who identified as “progressive” gave more “liberal responses. How would you have responded to the same questions? Do you think your teaching philosophy is more progressive or more traditional? [Find out more about these two philosophies](#) and consider where your beliefs and behaviours fall. Taking this time to reflect will help you prepare a strong answer if you’re ever asked about your personal teaching philosophy.

How to Answer the Question

If you’ve never given much thought to what your teaching philosophy is – and certainly never put it into words – take the time to read around the subject and reflect on your practice. An effective answer to this question would begin with a short and simple summary of your thoughts, followed by further elaboration, which should include a reference to recognised teaching philosophies combined with your own personal experiences. Give real examples of how your teaching philosophy is embedded in your daily practice as a teacher. Finally, have faith in yourself. You know more than you think you do!

Do you want to learn more about teaching philosophies and other key issues in education? [Download the Teacher Tapp](#) for a free daily dose of CPD.

behaved”, which demonstrates a liberal philosophy.