

## School Memories

I think that, of all my **childhood** memories, the strongest are from when I was **in school**. I didn't like school itself—and I don't trust anyone who says he did—but I remember having a lot of fun with my **clique** and **acting up** in class. I got good **grades**, but I wasn't the **teacher's pet**! I was always in some kind of trouble **at school**.

Did you act up at school? What did you do? What was your clique like? Was it a good time for you? Are you still in school? If you are, do you like it? Do you think your childhood and school experiences can help decide what kind of person you become?

### Vocabulary

**Childhood:** Were you ever a child? (Of course you were!) Were you a child for longer than a few days? We're talking about years, right? (My wife thinks that I'm still a child.) The years you spent as a child are your childhood. You can use it like “I had a happy childhood,” or “I want to give my son a happy childhood.” Or even “I was fortunate to start learning English in my childhood.” I will say this: it's funny that I'm an English teacher, because ever since my childhood I haven't liked teachers!

**In school:** I started going to school when I was six years old. I kept going to school every year until I was eighteen. From 1986 to 1998, I was in school.

We use the phrase in school to describe time when you're a student or pupil. (In the U.S. a 'student' is someone who goes to any school or university. In the U.K. you're a 'pupil' until university, and *then* you're a 'student'.) Even if you're not **at school**, you're still in school. For example, I can say “When I was in school, I visited my grandmother every weekend,” because in school only means that I was a student, not that I was in the building. When we want to say that something happened in the school building, we say **at school**.

**Clique:** I had four really good friends when I was **in school**, together, the five of us did everything together. We tried to take the same classes, we met in the breaks, and we always sat together at lunch. We were a clique.

A clique is a school-word, I've never heard it used in my adult life. A clique is a group of friends that you always see together. Unfortunately, I'm not in contact with most of my clique, anymore. We spent so much time together in our **childhoods** and now I don't know what they're

doing!

**Act up:** Did you always do what the teacher told you to do when you were **in school**? I hope not. Nobody likes the **teacher's pet**.

There are different kinds of 'bad kids' in a school. Some hurt the other students—they're bullies—others are simply rude, or impolite. The word for them is 'jerks.' But my **clique** and I didn't do any of that. We just had 'innocent' fun, like hiding all the chalk in the classroom, or always understanding the questions wrong. (If the teacher asked “What is your name?” we'd answer “My name is a word I use to identify myself.” We thought we were *very* funny.) We acted up.

When you talk about people, acting up, refers to manners that aren't 'bad' in the normal sense, but aren't 'good,' either. We use acting up to describe machines, too: if a machine becomes difficult—say, a car runs, but is sometimes difficult to start—we say it's acting up.

**Grades:** When you're **in school**, you take a lot of tests. If you answer 95% of the questions correctly on a test in the U.S., the teacher would mark your test with an 'A,' or your grade would be an 'A.' We use grades to indicate how well a student has performed. In the U.S., the best grade is an 'A+' and the worst grade is an 'E' or 'F-,' depending on the school. A student with 'good grades' usually gets 'A' and 'B' grades. A 'C' is supposed to be an average grade.

We also use the word grade to say which year you are in school. The first year you are in school, we say you're “in the first grade.” The second year you're in school, you're “in the second grade.” The last year of school at my high school was the “twelfth grade.”

**Teacher's pet:** Not always, but often the teacher has a favorite student. This student is a teacher's dream-come-true: he gets good grades, he does what he's told, he always raises his hand and gives the right answer. This student is the teacher's pet and nobody else likes this student (usually.)

I'm a teacher now, and I know there's nothing wrong with trying to get the right answer—that's why you're in class—but when you try to flatter the teacher just to get a better **grade**, then you're a teacher's pet, and even as a teacher I don't like it.

**At school:** I was **in school** for thirteen long years. But I was only at school for seven hours per day, on most days during the 'school year.' (The 'school year' runs from the end of one summer vacation to the beginning of the next.) At school refers to the time you spend inside the school building. For example, my mother would ask. “What happened at school today, Toby?” and I'd always answer “Nothin'. Nothin' *ever* happens at school.”