

## Vocabulary At School

It can seem like schools have a language all of their own. Not since school have I needed words like **pink slip** or **permission slip**. And I can go to the bathroom without a **hall pass**, now!

Inside the **classroom**, there is plenty of vocabulary to learn, too! In the front of the classroom is usually a **blackboard** or a **chalkboard** that the teacher writes on with **chalk**. It was always embarrassing to be called to the blackboard in school.

In my high school, there were **lockers** in the classrooms, too. We each had a locker assigned to us in our **homerooms**. I don't remember ever putting a lot of things in my locker. It was too much trouble to walk back to my homeroom between classes.

When I think back to when I was in school, what I remember most was how controlling school was: the permission slips and the hall passes. Was your school controlling? Do you think schools *need* to be controlling? What's your strongest memory of school? Was there anything in your school that you haven't seen since?

### Vocabulary:

**Pink slip / Permission slip:** A 'slip' refers to a piece of paper, normally a smaller than usual piece of paper. Take a normal piece of paper and cut it into thirds and you'll have three *slips* of paper.

A pink slip was called pink in my school because that was color of the paper, and it was the slip of paper that a teacher gave you when you were bad. If a teacher caught you somewhere you weren't allowed to be (and there were a lot of places that you weren't allowed to be), they gave you a pink slip. If you made trouble in class, the teacher gave you a pink slip.

A permission slip was something different. Sometimes a class would do something different than usual. Instead of spending all day in a **classroom**, they might go to a museum. Or they'd take the class to see a movie. Because they weren't normal classroom activities, they needed the parents' permission to travel with the students. So, they sent a slip of paper home with each student for the parents to read and sign. Then the students had to bring these permission slips back to school or they weren't allowed to join the class. I remember permission slips for trips to the movies, to museums, and I think I even had a permission slip to go to a farm, once!

**Hall pass:** My wife, who is German, thinks that American schools are like prisons. You need a **permission slip** for every trip the class makes, and you get a **pink slip** for every mistake. She was

most surprised, though, to learn that students aren't allowed in the hall during class times. They're supposed to be in their **classrooms**.

The idea is this: if students are allowed in the hall during class times, they won't go to class, they'll just hang out in the hall. So, if a teacher finds a student in the hall when he should be in class, the teacher gives the student a **pink slip**. That way, they can be sure that the students stay in their classrooms.

Sometimes, though, a student has to go to the bathroom during class times, or the teacher sends the student somewhere to get something. To make sure the student doesn't get a **pink slip**—after all, this is a case where he *should* be in the hall—the teacher writes a slip of paper saying that the student can be in the hallway. It's a hall pass. We needed a hall pass for the bathroom, or to go to the school nurse. And, if you forgot something in a different **classroom**, you needed a hall pass to go back and get it.

**Classroom:** In a school building, there are normally many rooms where the teachers teach. These are the classrooms. In the school I went to, each teacher had his own classroom and the students moved between classrooms. There are other schools, though, where the students have a classroom and the teachers go from one classroom to the next.

**Blackboard / Chalkboard:** Think of the **classrooms** you know from American movies. In the front of the classroom, is there a big, black area for the teacher to write on? That's the blackboard.

Traditionally, blackboards were made out of a black stone, called 'slate,' and that's why we call them blackboards. Now, some of them are green and we call them chalkboards, because we write on them with chalk.

**Chalk:** Was there a **blackboard** in your classroom? Did the teacher write on it with a pen? Of course not! Did the teacher use paint? No! There's a special way to write on a **blackboard**: we use chalk.

Chalk is a white, soft stone that leaves a white mark on a **blackboard**. Sometimes, kids use chalk to draw on the sidewalk. Gymnasts and climbers use chalk to improve the grip that their hands have. I used to steal the chalk in school. It was good for throwing at my friends when the teacher wasn't looking.

**Lockers:** We had a lot of books when I was in school. And it was a lot to carry. So that we didn't have to carry all of our things with us to every **classroom**, the school gave us small metal boxes where we could put our things and lock them up. Between classes, we were supposed to go to these lockers to put back the books we were finished with, and get out the books we were going to need.

In our lockers, we often had a picture of a girlfriend or boyfriend, our gym clothes and maybe a bag lunch. If you wanted to talk to someone during a break, a good place to look was his locker. Now, I still see lockers when I go swimming. At the swimming pool, there are lockers where I can leave my street clothes.

**Homerom:** Of course, in school it's important that they know who is there and who is not. The way that many schools check who is there is to have all the students go to the same **classroom** at the beginning of the day. There, the teacher checks who is there and who is not, and gives the information to the school. The **classroom** where a student has to go each morning is his homerom and the teacher he has there is his homerom teacher. In homerom, the homerom teacher would read the announcements for that day, so that we knew what was happening in the school.