



PERSONALITIES IN THE CLASSROOM - UNDERSTANDING & MOTIVATING STUDENTS BASED ON THEIR PERSONALITY STYLE

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS

I. WHY UNDERSTANDING PERSONALITY STYLES MATTERS

Students whose preferences differ from their teacher may find it difficult to adjust to classroom atmosphere and teaching methods. Teachers who vary their teaching styles after learning about personality style can motivate and teach a wider range of students.

THE REALITY: You have Eagles, Parrots, Doves, and Owls sitting in your classroom right now. What motivates one style can completely demotivate another. Understanding these differences helps you:

- **Stop labeling students** as "difficult" or "lazy" and instead understand their natural learning style
- **Adjust your teaching approach** to reach ALL students, not just those who learn like you do
- **Prevent conflicts** before they happen by understanding why certain students clash with your style
- **Increase engagement** by speaking to each student's motivational "language"

THE ADULT LEARNING DIFFERENCE: Why This Matters EVEN MORE in College

Unlike K-12 students, your college students:

- **Pay** to be in your class
- **Choose whether to stay or drop** your class
- **Rate you on evaluations** that may affect your career
- **Are adults** with established personality patterns

Bottom Line: The stakes are higher. When college students feel misunderstood or can't connect with your teaching style, they may drop your class, give negative evaluations, or struggle unnecessarily.

You can't change their personalities, but you **CAN** adapt your approach.



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II. THE FOUR PERSONALITY STYLES – BRIEF OVERVIEW OF STYLE AND WHERE EACH STYLE MAY FUNCTION BEST IN THE LEGAL FIELD

EAGLES - The Bold, Results-Driven Leaders

- **Core Traits:** Direct, decisive, goal-oriented, competitive, confident, impatient with details
- **What They Value:** Results, efficiency, challenge, autonomy, winning
- **In the Legal Field:** High-stakes litigation, trial work, aggressive advocacy

PARROTS - The Charismatic, People-Oriented Communicators

- **Core Traits:** Enthusiastic, social, persuasive, optimistic, talkative, expressive
- **What They Value:** Recognition, collaboration, fun, relationships, creativity
- **In the Legal Field:** Client relations, networking, team coordination, public-facing roles

DOVES - The Compassionate, Supportive Peacemakers

- **Core Traits:** Empathetic, patient, loyal, good listeners, conflict-averse, sensitive
- **What They Value:** Harmony, helping others, stability, relationships, kindness
- **In the Legal Field:** Client support, family law, victim advocacy, team support

OWLS - The Analytical, Detail-Oriented Perfectionists

- **Core Traits:** Precise, organized, systematic, cautious, quality-focused, reserved
- **What They Value:** Accuracy, logic, preparation, systems, expertise
- **In the Legal Field:** Research, document management, compliance, quality control

III. RECOGNIZING EACH STYLE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

How to spot each personality style based on observable behaviors:

EAGLE STUDENTS

In Class Discussions: Jumps in quickly, challenges ideas, wants to debate, may dominate

With Assignments: Gets it done fast, skips instructions, focuses on end goal

Red Flags/Challenges: Impatient with slow pace, dismissive of "unnecessary" details



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PARROT STUDENTS

In Class Discussions: Enthusiastic, tells stories, goes off topic, engages everyone

With Assignments: Starts excited but may struggle with follow-through, prefers groups

Red Flags/Challenges: Disorganized, talks too much, avoids solo detailed work



DOVE STUDENTS

In Class Discussions: Waits to be called on, concerned about others' feelings, avoids conflict

With Assignments: Thorough, asks for clarification, worries about doing it "right"

Red Flags/Challenges: Takes criticism hard, struggles with assertiveness, overwhelmed by conflict



OWL STUDENTS

In Class Discussions: Prepared with research, asks detailed questions, wants more information

With Assignments: Perfectionistic, needs clear rubrics, may miss deadlines seeking perfection

Red Flags/Challenges: Analysis paralysis, slow to start, stressed by ambiguity

IV. MOTIVATION STRATEGIES FOR EACH STYLE



HOW TO MOTIVATE & TEACH EAGLES



DO:

- Give them leadership opportunities in group work
- Present challenging, real-world scenarios
- Be direct and get to the point quickly
- Allow them to work independently
- Create competitive elements (case competitions, mock trials)
- Focus on practical application over theory
- Respect their time - don't belabor points



DON'T:

- Micromanage their process
- Waste time with excessive small talk



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- Make them sit through slow-paced lectures
- Force them into passive roles
- Give vague, open-ended assignments

TEACHING STRATEGY:

"Here's the problem. You have 30 minutes. Go." Eagles thrive when given autonomy and challenge. In your paralegal class, let them tackle complex client scenarios with minimal hand-holding. They'll figure it out—and love the challenge.

WATCH OUT:

Eagles may steamroll Doves in group work. Assign roles to balance dynamics. Also, they may skip important procedural details.

HOW TO MOTIVATE & TEACH PARROTS

DO:

- Incorporate group discussions and activities
- Let them present or share with the class
- Make learning interactive and fun
- Give public recognition for achievements
- Use real client interaction scenarios
- Encourage creativity in presentations
- Connect material to people and relationships

DON'T:

- Make them work alone for extended periods
- Assign boring, repetitive tasks
- Criticize them publicly
- Ignore their contributions
- Create a rigid, silent classroom



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TEACHING STRATEGY:

"Let's role-play this client intake." Parrots excel when they can interact. Have them practice client communication, present case summaries, or lead study groups. Their energy is contagious; therefore, use it to energize the whole class.

⚠️ WATCH OUT: Parrots may avoid detailed documentation work. Help them create or use systems (checklists, templates) to stay organized. Also manage their talking by setting clear expectations for discussion time vs. work time.

HOW TO MOTIVATE & TEACH DOVES

DO:

- Create a supportive, non-threatening environment
- Give private, constructive feedback
- Emphasize the "helping people" aspect of legal work
- Allow processing time before calling on them
- Show genuine care for them as people
- Provide clear expectations and structure
- Pair them with supportive partners

DON'T:

- Put them on the spot unexpectedly
- Create high-pressure, competitive situations
- Give harsh public criticism
- Force them into conflict scenarios unprepared
- Rush them through emotional processing

TEACHING STRATEGY:

"How can I help this student feel supported?" Frame assignments around helping and supporting. Doves thrive when they see the human impact. Let them work on client communication, victim advocacy scenarios, or team support roles.



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⚠️ **WATCH OUT:** Doves may struggle with assertiveness needed in legal settings. Gently push them to practice firm communication and setting boundaries. Help them understand not take constructive criticism personally.



HOW TO MOTIVATE & TEACH OWLS



DO:

- Provide detailed rubrics and clear expectations
- Give time to research and prepare
- Value accuracy and thoroughness
- Let them work independently
- Provide reference materials and resources
- Acknowledge their precision and expertise
- Create organized, logical presentations



DON'T:

- Give vague, ambiguous assignments
- Rush them or change plans last-minute
- Dismiss their need for detail
- Force immediate responses
- Create chaotic, disorganized environments



TEACHING STRATEGY:

"Research this issue and create a comprehensive brief or report." Owls excel at research, analysis, and detail work. Give them complex legal research projects, document review assignments, or system-building tasks. They'll create something thorough and impressive.

⚠️ **WATCH OUT:** Owls may get stuck in analysis paralysis and miss deadlines. Help them understand that in legal work, "done" sometimes beats "perfect." Encourage them to balance quality with efficiency.



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V. CHALLENGE: ONE STRATEGY FOR EACH STYLE

Keep this on your desk and try **ONE** new strategy this week:

🦅 **EAGLE:** Give them a leadership role in a group project or let them tackle the "challenge problem"

🦜 **PARROT:** Let them present something to the class or lead a group discussion

🕊️ **DOVE:** Check in with them privately and ask "How are you doing? What can I help with?"

🦉 **OWL:** Provide a detailed rubric or checklist for the next assignment

VI. KEY TAKEAWAYS

REMEMBER: Teachers who vary their teaching styles after learning about personality styles can motivate and teach a wider range of students.

1. **No style is better than another** - Legal teams/companies NEED all four styles to be successful
2. **Understand Your Style In The Classroom** - Be aware of your own style and intentionally vary your approach (use The Home Rule!)
3. **Most students are a blend** - Look for dominant traits, not perfect categories
4. **Start small** - Pick ONE student who's struggling and try a new strategy based on their style
5. **Frame differences positively** - "This isn't wrong, it's just different"
6. **Encourage students to take a personality assessment** - helps students understand themselves and use their strengths

The goal isn't to change your students—it's to understand them so you can teach them more effectively.