

A quick, easy way to acknowledge kids' good choices



COMPLIMENT SLIPS and thank you cards

by Angela Watson

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Compliment Slips & Thank You Cards

A quick, easy way to acknowledge students' good choices

The problem with most behavior management systems is that the kids who are misbehaving get all the attention. It's hard to remember to pay attention to kids' GOOD choices when you're required to track and address their bad choices. And often, rewards are built into behavior management plans so that a child who struggles to stay on task gets a reward for 15 minutes of on-task behavior, but a child without that plan who is on-task 99% of the time every single day gets nothing.

- How can we as teachers acknowledge kids' good choices in the classroom simply and easily?
- How can we show appreciation to children who are respectful and hardworking on a daily basis?
- How can we give kids a token of thanks without training them to depend on prize boxes for motivation?



For me, one of the simplest solutions has been the use of compliment slips. I just typed up a number of tasks that I wanted to thank kids for, printed the compliments out, cut them apart, and stored them in a pencil box divided with little cards I made from old file folders.

Every few weeks, without warning, I chose one of the compliment types and placed them on the desk of my students. I'd notice who hadn't been tardy that day and left a "thank you for being on time to school" note on their desk when they went to art. Or during the kids' lunch break, I'd do a random desk check and leave notes that said "Thank you for keeping your desk so neat and clean" for the kids who had followed our clean desk diagram without reminders.

Sometimes I gave the compliment slips only to one or two kids at a time. When I got a new student who didn't speak English and a Spanish-speaking student took him under her wing, I placed a compliment slip on top of her backpack: "Thank you for being so kind and helpful to your classmates." When a student had the opportunity to keep a dollar she'd found on the ground but instead chose to turn it in, I gave her a compliment slip that read "Thank you for doing the right thing when no one was watching."

Although I rarely gave out any kind of tangible rewards to students, I'd amassed a small collection of sparkly pencils, stickers, and bookmarks, and decided to store them in the pencil box with the compliment slips. I thought of these as surprise gifts: something that I wanted to give to my students not out of obligation to a reward system, but as a token of appreciation for their help in making our classroom run smoothly. This is something I like to do on occasion with husband or family or friends who are so supportive and wonderful to me...why not my students? Why not give them an unexpected thank you gift and card?

I really can't overestimate the impact these compliment slips have had on my students. It didn't matter whether I gave a surprise gift or not: just saying thank you, and memorializing my appreciation in writing, was incredibly gratifying for the vast majority of students. One student attempted to collect every type of compliment slip I had created. Another tucked them carefully into the clear plastic pocket of her homework binder so she could admire them every time she took the binder out. Even the less enthralled still smiled and exchanged happy looks with me upon seeing the thank you note on their desks.

The results were especially impressive in regards to uniforms. In my public school, students were supposed to wear uniforms, but we were not allowed to enforce the rule. There was no consequence for being out of uniform, and there was a great deal of bitterness harbored among students whose parents made them follow the rules.

I created a compliment strip for uniform compliance and one day, I placed it on the desks of students who wore their uniforms on a regular basis. When the kids came in the classroom and read the slip, I said, "It's a just a note of appreciation. I wanted you to know that I see you following the rules every day and wearing your uniform even though some of the other kids don't and nothing happens to them. Thank you for following our school rules all these months even though there was no reward or consequence either way. You did the right thing because it was the right thing to do, and that's always a good choice."

The other kids noticed the slips, realized why they hadn't gotten any, and shrugged. But the next day, to my surprise, two more kids who had never worn uniforms before came to school in compliance! I smiled and told them I appreciated them following the rules and helping to make our school a more orderly place where kids can focus on learning and not on keeping up with expensive fashion trends. A week later, another student showed up in uniform for the first time. I made sure to pass out the compliment strips again that day!

The impact was so profound that other teachers started noticing and asking questions: How did you get so many of your students to wear their uniforms? I told them all I'd done (after the initial conversation about the purpose of uniforms) was acknowledge the kids who wore them and say thanks. The kids just wanted to feel acknowledged and know that someone had noticed what they'd done.

Because the compliment slips were such a powerful tool for thanking and appreciating kids, I decided to create a more polished version for my TeachersPayTeachers store. I've created individual slips in three different sizes (depending on how much paper and ink you can spare, and whether or not you also want to take time to write a personalized message to students on the slip.) I also created dividers so you don't have to use old file folders like I did: the two smaller versions of the slips will fit perfectly behind the dividers so you can find them easily.

How to Create the Compliment Slips:

Choose the size(s) you want to use. The smaller the slip, the less paper and ink you'll need! The two smallest sizes will fit behind the slip dividers. I recommend printing the slip dividers on card stock or heavier paper.

I've also included a version of the smallest strips (which are what I personally used with my students) without any colored border at all. You may want to use this version and print it on colored paper. This will allow you to print/photocopy in black and white, and when you cut the slips apart, you'll still see a nice colorful border because the paper itself is colored.

Additionally, there is a blank set of slips on which you can handwrite your own compliments.

How to Use the Compliment Slips:

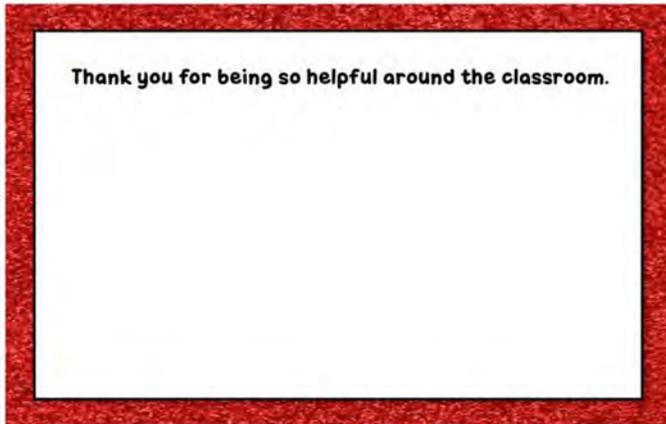
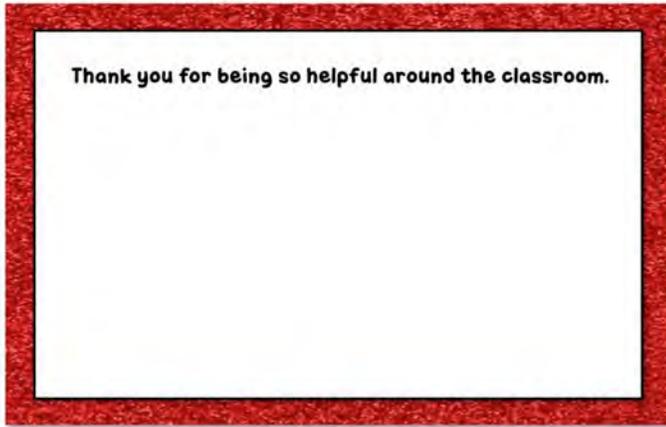
You can look for a particular behavior on a given day and give out the slips to all students who meet the expectation. You can also give the slips to an individual student if she or he demonstrates exceptional behavior.

I recommend placing the compliments on students' desks, backpacks, notebooks, etc. when the students are not present or not watching you. The element of surprise is an added bonus and makes the compliment seem more special! This also helps eliminate arguments and other issues with students who aren't receiving the slips.

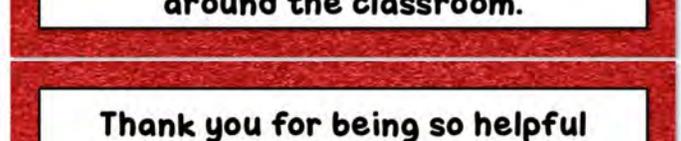
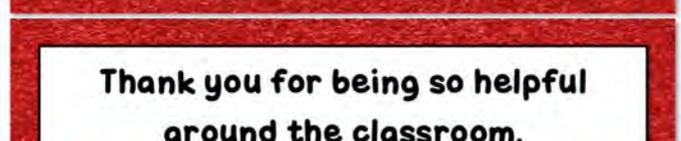
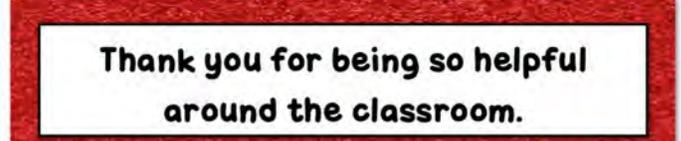
I don't suggest using the compliments in a passive-aggressive way to shame kids or guilt trip them into getting a compliment like their friends did. The slips are designed to be used as thank you notes and so I try to distribute them the same way I'd give a thank you note to a friend: privately, and often without them realizing they've been given anything at all until later on when they find the note.

The compliment slips are a small gesture that requires very little effort on the teacher's part, and can work wonders in motivating children and building a classroom community. Enjoy!

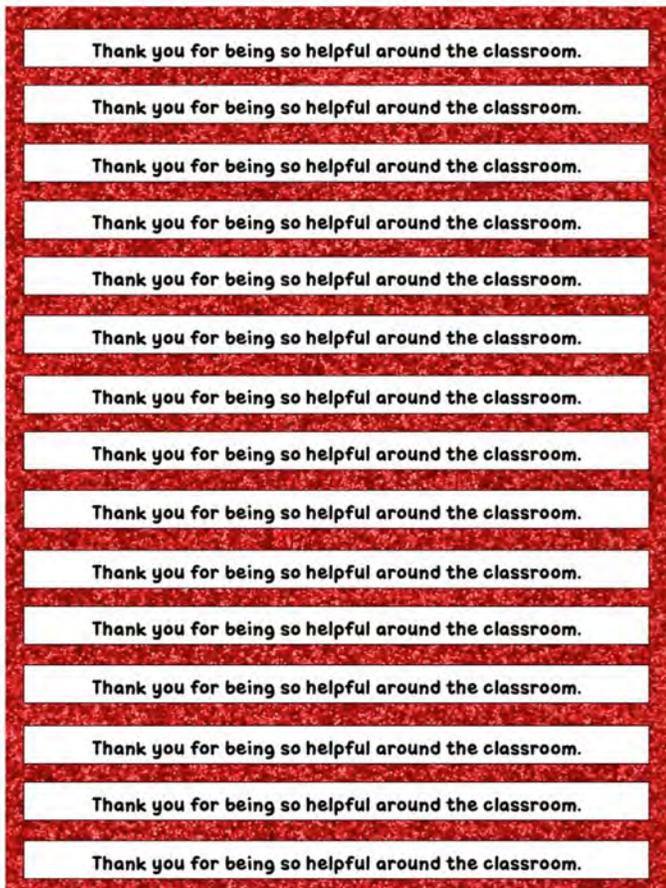
Sample Pages



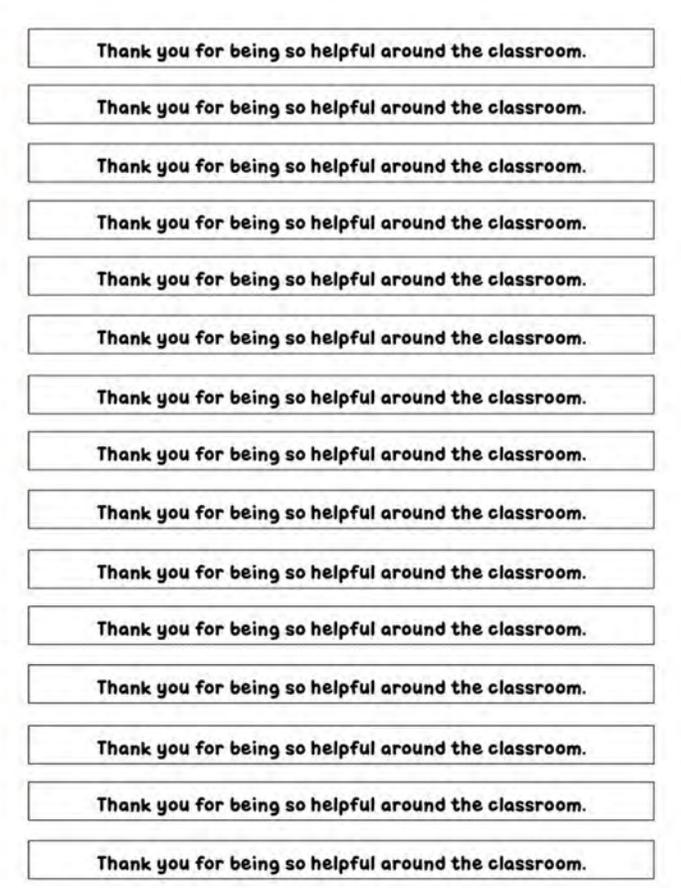
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BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE...

I'm **Angela Watson**, the creator of this resource. I'm a National Board Certified Teacher with a masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and have 11 years of classroom teaching experience and over a decade of experience as an instructional coach. I currently work as a Productivity and Mindset Specialist in the area of educational consulting. In practical terms, this means I author books, design curriculum, and provide professional development services. Everything I do is centered on sharing more effective, efficient, and enjoyable ways of teaching and learning!

I founded my website ([TruthforTeachers.com](https://www.truthforteachers.com)) in 2003 to connect with other educators. You can now find thousands of ad-free articles and resources there from me and our K-12 teacher-writer's collective.

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