Part of teaching is acting. Like it or not, in the classroom you are a performer. But unlike most performers, you have a captive audience. Use that to your advantage, but don’t take it for granted. Perhaps the most important thing is not to be boring. Of course that is easier said than done. And how you “entertain” is entirely up to you. Don’t assume a somber class atmosphere is somehow more “professional.” Healthy laughter in a class is always a good sign.

Students are paying good money to learn from you. The least you can do is treat their commitment in time and effort with respect. A teacher can be entertaining and not particularly good...but it’s almost impossible for a dull teacher to be effective. Most important, have fun. A fun and intellectual learning environment can be contagious. If you enjoy teaching, students will reply in kind.

Your job, in part, is to entertain your students. Not for the purpose of entertainment, but with the goal of learning. A sleeping student certainly isn’t learning. And blaming students for not learning despite your innate brilliance is a cop-out. If nothing else, keep your students awake. A sleeping student isn’t good for you, the appearance of your classroom, or the student. If students can’t stay awake, they shouldn’t be in the classroom (Professor Wynn has an alternative view in Classroom Management). And when a student really needs to sleep — and sleep deprivation is common among our students — the classroom isn’t the place for quality Z’s.

Students can describe professors in a few words. And they will describe you. But it is up to you how you wish to be described. There are a few basic categories by which most professors are described. There are different personalities you can present as a professor. Pick one or a combination that most comes naturally to you. If nothing comes naturally, do your best and have fun. Part of the job is improvising and making things up as you go!

No online module can tell you what role you should try to play as a professor. It’s dependent on you and your personality. But whatever your personality, keep in mind that during class, you are onstage, like it or not, with a captive audience. Make the most of that and enjoy it.