



GETTING GRADED

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It is a natural human tendency to want to categorise everything, to place items into fine columns with neat headings, and to put things in their "right" place. This urge to put whatever we can into particular boxes with respect to certain traits has given rise to useful systems, such as taxonomy, the science that sees the grouping of millions of different organisms into a structured hierarchy. Yet, when we persist on this innate desire, we tend to force ourselves into classifying things using almost entirely arbitrary data. When we start to classify the intelligence of students according to their high-school final grades, SAT scores, CGPA or IGCSE – exams taken once or twice in their school lives – what are the benefits? Or are there any benefits at all?

We use grades to distinguish between the "good students" and the "bad students", between those who apparently can and those who cannot. Most of us fail to see grades for what they are – indicators of how well people performed during a fixed period. A person who

gets a perfect score cannot claim to know and/or execute every aspect of the tested skill perfectly all the time. Likewise, people who fail a few tests are not automatically "failures". In these types of exams, luck is almost as important as your level of knowledge, though most people are unable to acknowledge this (or in the case of those who do end up scoring well, refuse to do so).

The significance of grades is so deeply engraved into our minds that we believe with it we can understand the level of competency a person has in a field or on a topic. When a student gets a graded paper back, not only do the teacher and peers judge based on the number or letter written in red ink but the confidence levels of the student is also severely affected. A good grade is like a thumbs up, a "you're good to go" of sorts, but on the other side of the coin, a bad grade feels like the end of the road, an immense discouragement, even though it should not.

Grades might not be an accurate scale of intelligence, yet they should not be dismissed entirely. After

all, only our university acceptances and careers depend on it. Bitterness aside, the grades on our report card generally reflect the effort we put in over the course of the preparation period. It plays a better role as a measure for perseverance than as a tool for gauging genius. It shows us how much hard work we put in. Therefore, we should interpret our grades as the summary of how well we equipped ourselves for that particular assessment, no more, no less.

Distressing factors arise when we over-emphasise on the meaning of our grades. Scoring lower than the next person does not necessarily mean you are any worse a student than him or her. Similarly, getting the highest marks in the class does not make you a mini-Einstein. Whether you are an A* student or someone on the less admirable end of the grades spectrum, it should never serve to hinder your studies or dissuade you from your goals. No matter how much the system presses you, always believe in yourselves, not just your grades.

Types of people in pet society Facebook groups

SALMA MOHAMMAD ALI

As a lonely person who spends much of her time looking at cat pictures, I frequent all the pet society groups on Facebook. Below are the categories of people I seem to come across in every group.

ALWAYS TO THE RESCUE

They are always on the lookout for animals in need of help. A new-born kitten dying without its mother, a dog injured in an accident? This person has either taken action already and is temporarily fostering the animal while posting for others to adopt, or they will mention its location – a call to arms for fellow animal lovers to rescue the poor animal. All my respect and appreciation for these folks; we need more people like them.

MORE ABOUT THEMSELVES, THEIR KIDS, OR THEIR CLOTHES

This person will post something about their adorable cat, possibly named Puchki with a caption highlighting said cat's activities. But this aforementioned Puchki is nowhere to be found in the post; you'd need very skilled eyes to locate a cat-like creature in the background what with the distracting items and faces making up 90% of the photo. Take a second look at the caption and you'll see some sneaky hidden hashtags such as #NewTop #Burberry.

THE OBSESSED OWNER

These people reside at the opposite end of the spectrum from the aforementioned kind. While the former's focus is hardly on the pet itself, the pet is the *only* thing on this group's mind. Is their rabbit having its favourite snack? Did their cat just successfully relieve itself? Aww! Here's a photo of its litter box. These people can't resist the urge to enlighten the world every half hour or so, nor do they forget to share the same post in as many groups as they can.



THE XENOPHOBE

This person has 101 reasons for why you're WRONG to keep a pug, starting with "deshi breeds are better". Informed suggestions are fine, and yes, more local dogs and cats deserve to be adopted, but you can't force people to do something by starting an aggressive confrontation on social media – especially, people you've never met.

THE VEGAN

You come across a photo of a fluffy puppy that just makes your heart melt. And then you read the caption: "Would you steal this puppy from its family, cook it, and eat it? No? Den y eat other animalz? If u call urself animal lava bcom a vegan 2day!!" Once again, well-meaning message lost in overly aggressive approach.

GRUESOME PICTURES AND FAKE PETITIONS

Wanting to help animals is great and necessary; signing a petition to bring about that help is awesome too. But it doesn't take a genius to figure out if a site asking you to sign a petition is legitimate or fake, and just trying to defame a product or organisation. The least you could do is research before hitting the "share" button.

Salma Mohammad Ali fears she is becoming a crazy cat lady and uses writing as a means to grasp on to sanity. Send her your views/hate/love at fb.com/salma.ali209