

HOW TO SECURE AND RETAIN ATTENTION

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How to Secure and Retain Attention by James L. Hughes

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JAMES L. HUGHES

**HOW TO SECURE
AND
RETAIN ATTENTION**

HOW TO
SECURE AND RETAIN
ATTENTION.

BY

JAMES L. HUGHES,

INSPECTOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS, TORONTO, CANADA.

"Attention makes the genius: all learning, fancy, and
science depend upon it."



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For young teachers I know of no book that contains, in the same compass, so much matter bearing directly on their work, and capable of being immediately utilized. They cannot make a better investment of fifty cents.—*N. A. Newell, State Sup't, Maryland.*

I have never seen a book of more practical value to teachers. At what rate can I procure twenty-five copies?—*R. B. Snow, City Sup't, Auburn, N. Y.*

The "Mistakes in Teaching" has come, and I have read it with interest. It is a useful book, and should be in the hands of all teachers. It points out clearly those things in which nearly all of us are guilty. I hope the book may meet a ready and extensive sale.—*D. M. Reynolds, Sup't Schools, Fairbault, Minnesota.*

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In the elementary work of the first year in didactics, *MISTAKES IN TEACHING* has been recommended. It is believed that "the first and foremost progress in any department of work is to learn to avoid the mistakes one is liable to make. Young teachers, before they begin to teach, should know the rocks that lie in their course." A hundred common and almost universal errors in school management, discipline, method, and manner, are here pointed out and corrected.—*Prof. B. N. Feltus, Iowa University, in article on Normal Institutes, Iowa Normal Monthly.*

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PREFACE.

"There is and there can be no teaching, where the attention of the scholar is not secured. The teacher who fails to get the attention of his scholars, fails totally." So writes a thoughtful educator, and every observant teacher knows that the statements are correct. The most important work of a teacher both in regard to the learning of school lessons and the formation of proper mental habits by his pupils, is the development of the power to give concentrated and sustained attention to a subject.

While fully agreeing with the opinion that natural aptitude has much to do in deciding the measure of a teacher's success, the author knows that the power of securing and retaining attention can be acquired and developed. This book has been written with a sincere desire to aid in the accomplishment of this important object.

TORONTO, February 20th, 1880.

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HOW TO SECURE AND RETAIN ATTENTION.

CHAPTER I.

KINDS OF ATTENTION.

Attention may be *Negative* or *Positive*.

Negative Attention. A pupil may look without seeing, listen without being conscious of hearing, and hear without comprehending. He may sit and dream. The mind has *inner* as well as *outer* gates. The outer gates admit merely to the courtyard of the mind. A great many pupils keep the inner doors closed to much of the teaching done by their teachers. We may perceive without receiving distinct conceptions. Thousands look at a store win-

dow in passing it without being able to name or even give the color of a single article in it.

We may hear also without taking in the thoughts of the person speaking. How often men sit in church and hear a preacher's voice without noting his words! The sounds he makes gets through the gates of the castle wall, but the castle itself is shut and filled with other tenants. The telephonic key has not been adjusted, and direct communication has not been established. We hear various sounds—the bell of the factory or the school, the whistle of the steam engine, the song of the birds, &c.—without always being consciously impressed by them. Sometimes they influence or arrest our lines of thought, but more frequently, unless they convey a special message to us, we allow them to pass unheeded. Negative attention consists in the outward marks of attention merely. It is a form without reality; a seed without an active germ, from which nothing of life and beauty can ever spring.

Positive Attention. A pupil who gives positive or *active* attention, is attentive not merely with his body but with his mind. He has the *inner* as well as the outer gates of his mind open. His mind must be *willing* to receive the thoughts his teacher has to communicate, and it must not be preoccupied, or *actively engaged with other thoughts*. He must for a time forget his personality, and turn from thoughts of his own plays and work and all that directly interests him outside of the lesson. He must get out of his own current of thought and into that of his teacher.

Positive attention stands opposed to that rambling state of mind in which the thoughts move continually from one topic to another without dwelling upon any; and also to that apathetic and listless condition of the mind in which it is not conscious of thought; or in which ideas, if they exist, leave no trace in the memory. It is the kind of attention which a teacher must have from his pupils if he wishes to impress them. If he secures only *negative*, the minds of his scholars may be a thousand miles away, whilst their bodies may occupy positions of reverent attention.