**5 Ways to Teach Boys with Attention Difficulties**

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 Teachers, parents, and tutors all know it can be difficult to keep the attention of children, especially boys. A lot of young male students have difficulty staying on task, and this can have a substantial affect on their school work, which then affects their grades. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) appear to be more commonly diagnosed, but even boys who don’t have these disorders can have trouble focusing in school. Personally, I have found ways to help boys become more interested in what they are learning, which has improved their focus and cut down on wasted time in a lesson. Here are five ways to improve your teaching to help boys become more engaged in a lesson.

1.Relatability

 An easy way to get a student’s attention and interest is to make the work more relatable to their life. One way to do this is to use real-life examples that the student understands and is interested in. For example, instead of using the bland basic questions about Susie having 17 apples and David taking away 5 apples, you can change the names and the objects to something the child likes. Most boys like video games so change the name to their name, change the apples to video games, and automatically the question has more appeal. I often create my own word problems or paragraph topics based on the students’ interests and hobbies. You will be surprised how much more engaged they are when they are talking about sports or video games instead of subtracting fruits or writing about generic school topics.

2. Competition

 Everyone has a little competitive edge inside of them, but in my experience, boys seem to thrive in competitive atmospheres. I try to use the competitive nature of boys to spark their engagement in learning. Whether it is a game against the tutor or a challenge against themselves, most boys will rise to the occasion. I use competition in one-on-one games against the students such as a simple card games involving math skills. Even though many of these games are based on chance, a little gentle trash-talking about who’s going to win will often perk up the student and sharpen their engagement. If they see that the tutor is into the game and competitive, it becomes more fun for them and ignites their competitive edge. Another form of competition is to use timers to have the student complete challenges in a certain time limit. By simply tracking their scores in challenges such as times tables, each session becomes a new opportunity to break their own record. This gets the competitive juices flowing and gives them a tangible way to see their own progress.

3. Games

 In my experience I have found games to be the determining factor in whether a boy says that being tutored is fun or boring. Just the word *game* seems to have a positive effect on boys’ engagement in a lesson. As an athlete growing up as a kid, I found practices to be boring, but the excitement of knowing I had a game that night got me through the whole day. It goes the same with learning. Tell a kid they are going to practice their times tables and they lose interest quickly but find a way to turn times tables into a game and they will have so much more fun they will not even realize they are practicing times tables. So, in a short lesson, it is pivotal to use creative ways to implement games, whether you find them online or create them yourself. Also, I always like to finish a lesson with a game as this leaves the student with a positive feeling as they leave the session, which often makes them more excited for the next one.

4. Short Tasks

 In the age of technology, it is no secret that kids have short attention spans. So many teachers and tutors like myself know how easily kids’ minds can drift away from a task, and it can be super hard to get them back on track. One solution to this problem is to find shorter tasks with a clear ending. For example, if you hand a student a worksheet with 100 addition problems, their automatic reaction is to worry about how much work is in front of them. Even if you say they only must do the first 20 problems, visually the task seems overwhelming. Therefore, it is more beneficial to find or create a worksheet with fewer problems, so they can clearly see how much is in front of them. Especially for elementary level students, I aim to keep every sheet, task, or game to under 10 minutes. Anything longer than that and you risk losing their attention.

5. Have Fun

 This is one tip that seems obvious but believe me it is not always the case. To put it simply, if the teacher or tutor does not look like they are enjoying themselves then how can we expect the students to enjoy themselves. Obviously, you can’t be laughing and joking the entire time or no actual work will get done, but find appropriate time to joke with the students, be a little silly with them, and laugh at yourself if you made a mistake to show them that mistakes are okay. Young boys love to laugh and have fun, so showing them that learning is fun can go a long way towards inspiring them to enjoy learning on their own time.

These five tips may not work with every boy, because there are always going to be outliers that may not like games or competition. However, generally boys are simple. They love talking about their interests, they love playing games, they love the spirit of competition, they want short achievable tasks, and most of all they just want to have fun.

I hope these tips have helped in some way. If you are a parent of a boy with attention difficulties, then here is a video that focuses on what you can do to best set them up to succeed. Whether you are setting up a space for them to complete their homework or preparing them for their tutoring, here are some things that you can do.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kR9kqI9yqM>