



Attention and Motor Skill Learning

By Gabriele Wulf

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Attention and Motor Skill Learning explores how a person's focus of attention affects motor performance and, in particular, the learning of motor skills. It synthesizes the knowledge coming from recent research examining the effects of attentional focus on motor performance and learning, and it provides practical implications for both instructional and rehabilitative settings.

Attention and Motor Skill Learning challenges traditional views that the method of learning a motor skill involves focusing attention on each part of the skill and internalizing proper execution. Instead, author Gabriele Wulf argues that the learning of new motor skills suffers when attentional focus is on the coordination of movements. When attention is directed to the desired movement effect, however, performance levels rise. Not only is a higher level of performance often achieved faster with an external rather than an internal attention focus, but the skill is retained better. The advantages of external focus apply to a variety of skills and skill levels and may be used while instructing athletes, children, and those with physical impairments as well as in any setting in which effective and efficient training of motor skills is a concern.

Attention and Motor Skill Learning not only presents the latest research on attentional focus, but it also offers practical solutions for bypassing or at least shortening the first “conscious” stage of learning. Instructors may then use these suggestions to provide their students or patients with a faster and more effective way to develop and perform motor skills. This text turns research into application by

- detailing how a person's attentional focus changes with age and type of task and in later stages of learning, allowing readers to apply the information to a variety of ages and settings;

- providing specific instructional examples and challenges in “Practical Applications” sections that may be used in everyday teaching scenarios; and

-including comparison tables and offering suggestions for differentiating instructions regarding internal and external foci of attention.

To help teachers understand how the wording of their instruction can facilitate the learning process, *Attention and Motor Skill Learning* shares insights from athletes, musicians, and speech therapists on their thinking as they perform or teach selected skills in each chapter's "Attentional Insights" section. The "Future Directions" sections at the end of each chapter highlight potential research studies that challenge readers to use and further develop the methods and practices in the book. Other useful features include case studies and chapter-opening scenarios that present motor-learning problems and demonstrate the role of attentional focus in solving them.

Attention and Motor Skill Learning provides many practical examples and implications for teaching, learning, relearning, and performing motor skills. This book will help readers better understand the effects that attentional focus has on motor performance and learning as well as the mechanisms underlying these effects. While challenging traditional learning methods, this book presents the latest research and demonstrates how changing one's focus of attention can speed the learning process and lead to more effective performance of motor skills.

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Gabriele Wulf, PhD, is a professor in the department of kinesiology at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Dr. Wulf has more than 100 publications in motor learning and control and 35 publications related to attentional focus and motor skills. She initiated the line of research described in this book—external versus internal focus of attention—in the mid-1990s. She has been a section editor for *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* and *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* and has been an editorial board member for *Journal of Motor Behavior*, *Human Movement Science*, and *International Journal of Fitness*, as well as an international advisory board Member for *Physiotherapy*. She also served as secretary and treasurer from 2002 to 2004 for the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity.

In her leisure time, Dr. Wulf enjoys working out, skiing, windsurfing, scuba diving, and riding her motorcycle.

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