

Tips to retaining young students.

Sometimes retaining students can be a difficult thing. As we all know, retaining students for years is our goal. Not only does it benefit us, but it also benefits the students as well. Here are a few ideas that I employ.

- 1. Make it fun.** If a student dreads coming in for a lesson, it is difficult to retain them. Therefore, with youngsters, include little games and physical activities. A couple of simple ideas are, Guitar Tic Tack Toe, Guitar Simon Says, and Guitar Races. These are simple variations on the games we all know, but if you play guitar Simon Says the student will end up repeating several pieces many times. Moreover, they will not even realize that they are actually practicing.
- 2. Progress is essential.** If all you do is play silly games and if the games are not didactic enough, the student will not advance quickly. If this happens, they may feel frustrated or the parents may get frustrated. Therefore, during some lessons you should have more work, and less fun. Conversely you need some days to be more fun and less work. A good balance is essential.
- 3. A good relationship with parents is very important.** If you can establish an open, honest, and forthright relationship then you may retain the student even if they do not enjoy the lessons at first. To do this you first have to be a good teacher, however without a good relationship with the parents, even good teachers will lose more young students.
- 4. Love your job.** Become invested in your students and their best interests. I am very lucky because I love my job. I love working with students of all ages, but young students are a special joy. Seeing the look on their faces when they realize, "I can do it!!" It is a magical feeling. Even if my performing career were to take off, I would still teach no matter what. Sometimes I count my lucky stars that I do what I do. If you love it, really love it, the student and the parents will see your passion and it will spread.
- 5. Go the extra mile.** Do make-up lessons. Go to their house if necessary. Be at their performances. Congratulate them; make them feel special, because they ARE. After a performance, it is a good idea to pass out congratulation cards or certificates to your students. This will also help.

These are a few ideas that I follow. I know many teachers who are excellent in the above mentioned areas, and they are also successful because of it. Really the most important thing I can think of is to LOVE your work. This will lead to all of the above points...

Michel Chatara-Morse

Michel Chatara-Morse is an accomplished guitarist with a Bachelor of Arts in Guitar Performance from the University of Puget Sound and a Master's Degree in Guitar Performance from Roosevelt University, Michel Chatara-Morse is an established Chicago musician and teacher. He is currently studying with world renowned guitarist Denis Azabagic and has studied with Douglas Rice, Pam Kimmel, Sergio Assad, and Paul Henry. Mr. Chatara-Morse is a registered Suzuki Association of the Americas Teacher having attended the 2006 Greater Pittsburgh Suzuki Guitar Institute. Moreover, he has participated in Master Classes held by such players as David Leisner, Andrea Cannon, Robert Guthrie, Brian Torosian, and David Russell. Michel Chatara-Morse is an active soloist and chamber musician regularly performing in Chicago in such venues as The French Quarter, Valentino Vineyards, the Palmer House, the Mid-Day Club, Magiano's, and the Chase Tower Promenade. Michel currently teaches for DePaul University Community Music School, the Suzuki-Orff School of Music for Young Musicians, the Michel Chatara-Morse Guitar Studio, and the Ravinia Festival Community Outreach Program Lawndale Conservatory Partnership.

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