# Bates: Secret Genius or overhyped hoax?

Chances are, if you’ve searched natural vision improvement, you’ve been introduced to the bates method

The internet is filled with his followers. Many have been around for a while, probably since the beginning of the internet boom, while others are relatively new. There are some that have their own sites specifically to push the bates method, and then there are those that write blogs on some of the more popular sites. Regardless, a simple internet search is likely to give you something about bates or the bates method.

Let’s say you “have a friend” who have NEVER been introduced to bates. This friends would like to learn more about this “bates method.

I would first congratulate that “friend” of yours for somehow managing to not encounter any of the bates teachers on the internet: really impressive task. And then I would tell him/her to not fall into the trap; The bates method won’t do you much help if you want to “achieve 20/20 vision”. But he/she should still read more about what the bates method really is ([link](https://www.recovervision.org/post/william-bates-bates-method)).

William Bates is a celebrity in the field of vision improvement. He is more famous deceased than he was when he was alive because his followers still echo his findings and teachings. The bates method is held as the holy alternative to glasses. It’s treated like a secret life hack that was kept from humans. But bates was more than just the creator of this method.

**Bates was a researcher, an author, a scientist, and a physician.**

He is also remembered as a leading ophthalmologist, and one of the first scientists to introduce the concept of natural vision correction to the western world. Poor guy is either hailed as a god or treated like a stain on the earth. There is rarely an in between. Bates was by no means a god, but he does deserve more credit because he did make and pave the way for eye-opening 👀 findings. For example, bates believed the eyes are fluid and not necessarily stuck in one state. They respond to stimuli and can improve or worsen. This is still true today.

On top of that, there was also a compelling storyline to him; the cliche story you would hear of a hero whose name rises out of the shadows.

1. He graduated from Cornell
2. Graduated with a medical degree from Columbia university
3. Discovered medicinal uses for adrenaline
4. Invented a way to cure astigmatism
5. Wrote a book called Perfect sight without glasses
6. Created the better eyesight magazine that published from 1919 to 1930

The guy was in fact a genius…. But for his time period, and maybe not in the area of vision correction.

Today, part of the reason why Bates is treated as the god of natural vision correction is because his followers believe he discovered things that shook the ophthalmology / optometry sector of society, and then he was silenced. The internet is littered with his followers: many selling kits, seminars, or even claiming to be “coaches.” These people who follow EVERYTHING bates swore was true. Contrary to the negative view of Dr. Bates, he was not a complete lunatic. But that doesn’t cover the fact that his discoveries are outdated while others are plain illogical.

Crazy Guy

One of his main assertion was the lens was not used in focusing, something that any ophthalmologist today would laugh at. Bates claims to have conducted a study that he described in his book. The book is not copyrighted; you can find it online. In the study various animals such as rabbit and fish eyes were used to prove the point that the act of adjusting between near and far happens because the eyeball elongates and shortens.

Bates swore that the lens is not needed, he even claimed that some of his patients and animals that he tested on were able to focus like normal even after their ocular lens were removed. This theory by bates was published after Von Helmholtz’s theory: which is still widely accepted today and says the lens and ciliary muscle (muscle that controls the lens) allow us to focus between near and far. Bates’s theory never gained ground.

It has been validated through multiple studies since then that the lens is used in focusing. Yet, for the internet, that one study by bates outweighs them all.

As a matter of fact, that study has been found un-reputable by many reviewers. In his book, bates also has inconsistent interpretations from his own study. It was rejected, and was never scientifically published. It was so bad, that bates was ridiculed and disrespected by the scientific community.

The muscles that he claimed stretch and shorten the eyeball are the extra-ocular muscles.

The main extra-ocular muscles are the four rectus muscles and two oblique muscles. These are the same muscles that move the eyes up-down, side-to-side and rotate the eye in and out (yes, your eye does rotate). When these muscles tense up, they cause problems: problems that can all be solved via the bates method.

Sorry to say, Bates wasn’t really right. His theories weren’t right (you can read more about some of the fallacies here), and there isn’t really a one size fits all for eye disorders. That’s like a doctor prescribing pain-killers for everything from serious to a common cold.

Sure, we can give him the oldie card, he probably didn’t know any better. He probably didn’t have the knowledge or the scientific discoveries weren’t made yet. Back in his day, people were still driving ford model T’s. Poor guy went against the ophthalmologist establishment and his theories/findings were shut down by the scientific community. But at the end of the day, bates was not an evil scientist with bad intentions.

He was no less of a scientist, but also wasn’t a holy grail. Ultimately, Bates was a little bit of both: A genius who paved the way, but also a hoax in the form of natural vision correction “coaches.” They insist on pushing the outdated and disproved science. Beware!