

IMPROVING CONCENTRATION



Defined

Concentration is thinking. It is active involvement in the task at hand, whether that is reading a textbook, listening to a lecture, or planning a schedule for writing a major paper.

How to Avoid Distractions

Set up an environment that is conducive to study.

Plan your own quiet corner away from distractions. Include a desk stocked with all the tools you need, a comfortable chair, and good lighting.

Study on campus.

Stay on campus after class to avoid distractions in your room or dorm. When you're done, go home and relax.

Take care of basic physical needs.

Be sure to eat, sleep, etc. first. Plan short naps and periods of exercise to revive you.

Do something relaxing before going to bed at night.

This helps to keep from dreaming about the exam you have the next day and to relax instead. Try listening to music or reading some good fiction.

If Your Mind Still Wanders

Plan ahead.

Before you tackle any assignment, make a short list of your priorities.

Be realistic when setting your goals.

If you're two chapters behind in your psychology reading, realize that you won't finish in one 2-hour session. Instead, break the assignment up into several five-to-six page sections and spread it over the entire week.

Just do it!

Once you have decided on a plan of action, plunge into it. Ideally, start with the hardest tasks first, or set a deadline if you start with the easiest.

Deal with your personal problems.

If the same problem is preventing you from concentrating, STOP! Decide on a plan of action. This may include talking with a counselor or friend. Then, after you have completed your work, deal with the problem.

Don't daydream.

One of the worst time-wasters is daydreaming. Instead, establish the positive habit of diving right into your work.

Techniques to Monitor Concentration

Maintain a positive attitude.

Keep your long-term goals in mind. Try to make as many practical applications of the material as possible.

Use the checkmark technique.

Have a sheet of paper handy by your book. When you catch yourself not concentrating, put a checkmark on the sheet. The mere act of doing this will remind you to get back to work. Students report that when they first tried this system, they accumulated as many as 20 marks per textbook page, but after one or two weeks, they were down to only one to two checkmarks per page.

Chart your progress in a course.

Know how you are going to be graded and set realistic goals for the grades you hope to achieve. Decide how much study time you need to reach this goal.

How to Improve Concentration While Reading

Divide and conquer.

Break up the material into small sections. Use the headings to help you.

Preread.

Preview the material beforehand and ask yourself review questions as you go.

“Talk” to the author.

Pretend as though you could have a conversation with the writer of the material. Agree with them. Disagree with them. Ask them questions. Use this technique to stay actively involved in the materials.

If Outside Problems Interrupt Your Concentration

Use campus resources.

There are many free resources available to you on campus. Learn where those resources are. Visit www.purdue.edu/asc for a full list.

Talk with your professor.

Finding it hard to concentrate on a particularly difficult course? Don't forget about your greatest resource: your professor! Make an appointment to discuss your troubles with them. See what tips they have to aid in concentrating on the material and to being successful in their course.

See your academic counselor.

Counselors are trained to answer your questions and are ready to help you. Go to www.purdue.edu/asc to find out more about scheduling an appointment.