

How to Develop Better Concentration While Studying

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Think of concentration improvement as a three-step process:

- 1) Learn the causes of poor concentration and decide which apply to you.
- 2) Understand what you can do to control these factors.
- 3) Make control a habit.

	LEARN THE CAUSES	CONTROL THE CAUSES
External Causes	Environmental distractions: TV, chairs that are too comfortable, snacks, other people, etc.	Leave or rearrange a distracting environment. Go to a library or a classroom when you seriously intend to study.
	Noise: music with words, conversations.	Train yourself to study away from others and in silence.
Internal Causes	Physical distractions: hunger, drowsiness.	Plan to study when you're most alert. Eat a high-protein snack. Do five minutes of light exercise to wake up.
	Boredom, dislike, disinterest	Find a good reason for taking the class; talk with other students and the professor.
	Anxiety about studies	Make sure you know how to study effectively. Put the course in perspective.
	Intimidating study tasks	Break up large tasks into achievable subtasks. Do the most intimidating task first. Give yourself rewards for progress and punishments for avoidance.
	Daydreaming	Separate daydreams from studying. When your mind starts to wander, write down the interrupting thought and continue studying. Or recall important points and then turn away from your book and continue to daydream. When you're ready to read again, do so. The trick is not to daydream and read at the same time.
	Personal worries	Identify and define the problem and develop a concrete, specific plan to resolve personal worries. Talk with someone who can help: a friend, a counselor, a specialist.

MAKE CONTROL A HABIT

Even if you lapse into old habits of distraction and daydreaming, keep requiring yourself to concentrate using these controls until you can routinely concentrate well on your studies for fifty minutes of every hour.