

# Concentration

## Study Smarter Not Harder



**Study Skills Services**  
**323 Oswald Building**  
**246-6537**

# Study Smarter Not Harder

Studying isn't as hard as you think; however, it does require time and effort. By using the following techniques you'll find that you can decrease the amount of time you spend studying and increase the amount you learn.

- **Create a good study environment.** Choose a place that is as distraction-free as possible (away from TVs, phones, stereos, people, etc.). The ideal study area should be environmentally comfortable with furniture, lighting, and temperature that match your physical needs. Your study area should contain all the materials you need (pens, pencils, paper, dictionary, etc.) with clutter kept to a minimum. You should study in the same place every time so that your brain becomes conditioned and will automatically kick into study mode. 
- **Study when you are most alert.** For most people this will be during the day or early evening. Don't study when you're tired or hungry. Sometimes a short (20-30 minutes) nap restores energy. Watch what you eat and avoid caffeine, sugar, and simple carbohydrates as much as possible. Exercise 30-60 minutes at least 3-5 times a week. 
- **Schedule regular study time on your calendar/planner.** Treat study time as you would any other appointment. The general rule of thumb is 2 hours of study time for each hour in class. So, for a 12-hour schedule, you need 20-24 hours of study time each week.
- **Set goals before you begin each study session** (number of pages you want to read, number of math problems you want to solve, etc.). Be realistic and specific about your goals.
- **Study in 50-minute segments and take a 10-minute break.** Set a timer so that you don't waste time watching the clock.

- **Study difficult or boring subjects first.** You're more alert at the beginning of your study time, plus you'll get the worst out of the way.

- **Change subjects/tasks after each break.** Variety helps to eliminate boredom and allows your brain to better process information.



- **Review your notes on a regular basis.** Daily reviews are better than last-minute cramming. Research shows that it takes 32 meaningful repetitions to move information from short-term memory to long-term memory. Reciting out loud also aids in retention of material.

- **Learn to focus your attention.** Notice when your mind wanders and try to get yourself back on track. When you find yourself daydreaming, stop and take a short break. If you find yourself thinking about a small problem (laundry, making a phone call, etc.), add it to your "to do" list, or if it's something you can take care of quickly, go ahead and do it and then get back to studying. If you're worrying about a larger problem, consider talking to someone such as a counselor, friend, or minister who can help reduce your anxiety. The key is to recognize when you lose focus and determine the best way to reduce and/or eliminate distractions that hinder your ability to concentrate during study time.



- **Stay on top of your schoolwork.** Do a little bit each day. For example, if you have a chapter to read, read a few pages each day. Or, if you have a paper due at the end of the semester, break it into smaller steps and do a little bit each week.
- **Reward yourself.** When you complete a study goal, give yourself a reward (TV show, movie, computer game, snack, etc.).

