Concentration

*What Is Concentration?*

Studying requires long periods of sustained focus on new knowledge and working with that knowledge so it becomes part of long term memory. This demands concentration – the ability to work intensely at a task to the exclusion of every other demand on your attention.

For many students, this is the most difficult part of becoming a good student. They lack the capacity to concentrate for more than a few minutes before something else claims their attention and their mind wanders from the task at hand.

*What Interferes With Concentration?*

There are 3 general types of distractions.

1. those from your external environment:

uncomfortable chair, poor lighting, noise, study surface too high or low etc

*solution* – improve/change your study location. Get rid of all distractions (TV, music, roommates) and have all of the necessary materials ready to go when you sit down to study.

1. those from your internal environment:

lack of sleep, poor diet, lack of exercise, worry about money, relationships etc

*solution* – take better care of yourself

1. a lack of focus or goals

questioning why you are doing this, where are you going etc

*solution* – write out some immediate, short tem and long term goals for yourself – they should be specific, manageable, attainable, realistic and timely. Expect and plan for setbacks – you should be constantly rewriting, revising, revisiting and reviewing your goals.

*How Can You Improve Your Concentration?*

Enhancing your concentration is like any other form of training ... it takes time, but it is worth it. If you stick to the following suggestions, you will see your concentration increase steadily.

1. Have at least 3 different study tasks prepared in advance (math homework, chemistry worksheet and an English reading)
2. Begin to study
3. As soon as you start to notice that you mind is wandering (even a little bit), stop studying and gently remind yourself that you are trying to remain focused
4. If the distraction is something that you should do something about, quickly jot it down on a to do list
5. Decide to move on to one of the other tasks, but before you do...
6. Do one more small, easy item from the current task (one more problem, read one more page). Really focus yourself and use every ounce of your concentration powers for this brief time.

The idea is to push yourself a little bit to focus and end with a positive experience. These positive experience will accumulate and will help your brain to associate pleasant experiences with studying. Sound weird, but it works.

1. When you have finished that item, move on – even if you now feel you could do more with the original task
2. Begin to study again.