

WAYS TO IMPROVE MOTIVATION & CONCENTRATION

Design an adequate study environment for yourself. Check lighting, noise, comfort of furniture, etc., in 3 or 4 places to determine which spot works best for you.

Make sure you have all the tools (i.e., compass, notebook, pens) you need before beginning a study session.

Choose a regular time to study each day so that you set a pattern for yourself.

Have a special reminder pad for jotting down extraneous thoughts that enter your mind while you are studying (i.e., calling Linda for a lunch date).

Use a symbol for studying. Choose an item, like a hat, that you put on when, and only when, you are studying, or an item that you place on your desk as you study.

Relax your body before starting to study.

Set realistic goals.

Solve some of the problems that are interrupting your concentration (i.e., speak to your professor about the lecture that you didn't understand).

Keep a pencil in your hand while studying so that you can be an active participant in the process.

When you find that you are not concentrating, take some action. Suggestions: Make a check mark every time you find your mind wandering; stand up and turn around when your mind wanders.

Take a short break after every 20-40 minutes of reading to let what you have just read have a chance to sink in and find its way to connectors and memory storage points in your mind. Do not use the break for a phone call, TV, etc., just sit back and reflect on what you've read.

Exercise on a regular basis. Try reading before you study, to increase alertness.

Get 7-9 hours of sleep per 24-hour period. It does not all have to happen at one time.

Do not give in to mental fatigue--the kind that goes away when you do something besides studying. Push on and wait for the 2nd (or 3rd or 4th) "wind" that is another stage of alertness that will come if you persevere.

Imagine that your brain is filled with the subject that you are going to study and that there is no room for anything else. See that the entrances to your mind are blocked by that subject.

Take two minutes before reading, to jot down everything you expect to come up in the text you are about to read.

Employ an SQ3R technique to begin each subject.

Break assignments into small step-by-step tasks.

Analyze your study skills to make sure that your problem is one of concentration, not faulty study skills.

Look for a special interest in each subject for which you do not feel motivated. For example, if Biology does not thrill you, but you are interested in keeping your body in good shape, you may be able to develop an interest in nutrition, the effects of exercise on muscles, systems, etc.

Develop a contract for a particular study problem. Decide if you are more responsive to reward or punishment and construct a contract accordingly. For example, "For every 10 pages read, I can listen to music for 10 minutes", or "If I don't read 20 pages of history, I must wear mismatched socks tomorrow". Set up the contract on graph paper. Chart your progress over 5 study sessions before you consider making modifications.

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