

CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES

College offers so many things that make it difficult to study; distractions due to tv, text messages, Facebook, friends, parties... the list goes on. The key to improving concentration lies in understanding the cause of your distraction and to focus on eliminating it.

- Don't let music in the background become a distraction.
- Before you begin to study, summarize what you would like to get done, collect the materials (books, notebooks, pens, highlighters) you will need, and informally outline your study schedule.
- Try creating rewards for successfully completing a task; going for a walk or going online.
- Change the subject you study every one to two hours for variety.
- Vary your study activities: Alternate reading with more active learning exercises, like doing math problem sets.
- Take regular, scheduled breaks to exercise or relax.
- Maximize your energy level: When is your energy level at its highest? When are your low energy times? Study your most difficult courses at your high-energy times.

Washington State University offers this chart for determining how best to deal with some common distractions:

	Learn the Causes	Control the Causes
External Causes	Environmental distractions: TV, chairs that are too comfortable, snacks, other people, etc.	Leave or re-arrange 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 are most alert. Eat a high-protein snack. Do five minutes of light exercise to wake up.
	Boredom, dislike, disinterest	Find a reason that satisfies you 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.
	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: a friend, counselor, a specialist.

