

## Making Concentration a Habit

### While Studying

Think of concentration improvement as a **3-step process**:

1. **Learn the causes of poor concentration** and decide which apply to you.
2. **Understand what you can do to control them.**
3. **Apply these controls and make your concentration habitual.**

External Causes of Poor Concentration	What You Can Do to Control Them
TV/stereos in background Too comfortable chairs	Leave or re-arrange a distracting environment.
Food nearby Friends & family nearby Music	Go to a library or an empty classroom when you seriously intend to study.
Pets Telephone	Train yourself to study away from others and in silence.

Internal Causes of Poor Concentration	What You Can Do to Control Them
Hunger	Eat high-protein or fruit snacks and regular, balanced meals.
Drowsiness	Plan to study when you are most alert. Get adequate nighttime sleep. Do 5 minutes of light exercise to wake up.
Boredom, dislike, or disinterest in a class	Find reasons for taking a class that satisfy you. Join a study group. Ask instructors about the relevance of the course or the material in their class. Visit with a campus counselor. They help students with these problems frequently.
Anxiety about a class	Talk with students/instructors about the class. Make sure you know how to study effectively. Make sure anxiety about your studies is not something personal. See a campus counselor.
Intimidating assignments	Break up large assignments into smaller pieces and do a little each day. Do the most intimidating part first. Give yourself rewards for progress. Work with one or more other students.

<b>Internal Causes of Poor Concentration</b>	<b>What You Can Do to Control Them</b>
Daydreaming	When your mind wanders, write down the interrupting thought and go back to studying. Focus on spotting main ideas and details in textbooks and lecture notes. Make questions from main ideas using the details as answers. Deliberately stop trying to study and intentionally daydream. When you're ready to read again, do so. Don't try to read and daydream at the same time.
Personal worries	Identify and define the problem and develop a concrete, specific plan to resolve it. Talk with someone who can help: a friend, relative, a college counselor.

### **You Can Make Concentration a Habit**

Even if you lapse into old habits of distraction and daydreaming, keep expecting yourself to practice concentrating. Use the controls above until you can routinely concentrate well on your studies for fifty minutes out of every hour.