Improving Concentration

Study Environment

Environment plays a large role in your ability to concentrate while studying. Consider the following traits of your study environment and how they affect your ability to concentrate:

Noise Level
- Do you need complete silence or some background noise to concentrate?
- How much noise is too much noise?
- Do you like to listen to music while studying? What types of music allow you to maximize your concentration?

Presence of People
- Do you like to be completely alone while you study? Or do you need other people around?
- Do you need people present to also be quietly working or do you need some background noise?

Temperature
- What is your optimal room temperature for studying?
- Where can you find that ideal temperature or what can you wear so you are not too hot or cold?

Light
- Do you concentrate better when you have natural light?
- Do any light sources give you a headache? How can you avoid them?

Access to Distractions
- How easy is it for you to access your phone? Social media?
- How can you make it harder to access distractions?
- If you like studying in your room, what distracts you from studying?
- If you are easily distracted in your room, what study location will help you limit distractions?

Setting a Study Routine

Having a study routine can help you get “in the zone” and concentrate on studying. Here are some tips for setting a routine:

- Study at the same time and same place every day when possible
- Study after similar activities throughout the week. For example: after meals, before working out, etc.
- Study at a desk in an environment that mimics your testing environment as much as possible. This will improve your recall on test-day
- Consider forming a study group as part of your routine
- Have set lengths of time for studying and stick to them as much as possible. Knowing when your study session is over will give you a finish line to aim for and help you stay focused
- Don’t try to study for too long at one time. Try 60-90 minute study sessions. Large projects may require longer work sessions
- Make sure sufficient sleep and exercise are part of your routine to maximize your concentration when you are studying
Other Tips for Concentration

- If you get stuck with a problem, try for another 10 minutes. Make note of everything you tried and the specific step where you got stuck. Take your question(s) to your professor’s office hours and/or your next tutoring session.
- Keep a journal nearby to jot down any distracting thoughts that pop in your head so you can take care of them after you finish studying.
- Divide the material for each course into categories based on content and concentrate on one at a time; make study sheets, outlines, diagrams, etc. for each segment of the material.
- If a desire for perfection is keeping you from starting or finishing a task, remind yourself that it is okay for projects to be “good enough”, especially if you have several overlapping deadlines.
- Consider using an “interleaving” study strategy where you mix studying different topics/subjects rather than sticking with a single subject before moving on to the next. Study some math, then some English, then return to math.

Pomodoro Technique for Concentration

How does the Pomodoro Technique work?

- Study/Work for 25 minutes.
- Break for 5 minutes.
- If still working for more than 4 pomodoro cycles (2 hours), take a 15-20 minute break.

Pomodoro Technique Tips:

- Experiment with the length of your work versus break times to find the optimum balance needed to concentrate on your work.
- Be intentional with your breaks. Consider using them to:
  - Take a quick walk.
  - Do a quick mindful meditation. UCLA has several of varying lengths: https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations
  - Take care of one of your distracting thoughts (see above), but be mindful of how much time you spend on it.