
CONCENTRATION

Concentration can be one of the most difficult aspects of success to master. In our media bombarded society, we have been programmed by commercials, music, and advertisements to take in as much as we can in the shortest amount of time and then move on to the next stimuli. But if you can gain control of your thoughts, you improve your efficiency as well as your overall performance.

Remember: before concentrating on concentration, you should eat a well-balanced meal, make sure you have gotten enough sleep, and remove yourself from potential distractions.

Building Concentration Tips

Develop an interest. An excellent way to do this is by previewing the material. This will acquaint you with the subject and give you some background information.

Set a goal. Be specific when setting goals. Don't just say you are going to "study chemistry." Set a definite plan: "I will read ten pages and answer five questions." By setting a goal you have established an ending to your study time, otherwise, how do you know when you are done?

Prepare to concentrate. Study in a place designed only for study. Have the books and supplies you need in your study area. Every time you have to interrupt yourself to get something, you break your concentration.

Vary the activity. Concentration is a demanding mental task. No one can sustain peak attention over a prolonged period. Anticipate this by varying your activity as you study. Read for a period of time then switch to taking notes, writing summaries, creating test questions, or reciting aloud.

Stretch. Stand up, walk around, and face away from your books. The physical act of standing up helps to bring your thinking back to the task at hand.

Prevent daydreaming. The best way to overcome daydreaming is to be aware of it happening. Immediately when you begin to daydream, you need to force the distracting thoughts from your mind and get back on track. If you are unable to refocus your thoughts, try concentrating on the actual daydream. Focus on it, write it down, and think about it. By giving your daydream attention it no longer is in conflict with your need to study.

Relate what you are learning. You need to make meaningful associations between what you are learning and what you know. This way your learning is more readily recalled in the future. Relating also helps you to actively seek information which keeps you concentrated.

Set a time. Set a time for the completion of your task. This will keep you focused as you attempt to complete the work before the time is up.

Pace yourself. Trying to do too much too fast destroys concentration. When the assignment is long or involved, it is best to break it up over a few days.

Organize the assignment. If your approach to the assignment is unplanned, that in itself may become a distraction. You should organize the assignment into a series of related and specific tasks. By previewing the material first, you are better able to organize the assignment.