

# Concentration

**DEFINITION:** To fix your attention on something.

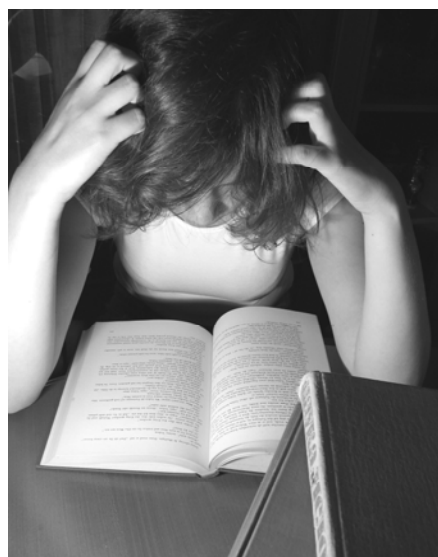
**HOW:** By keeping distracting thoughts away.

**PROBLEM:** It is hard to concentrate while studying.

**SOLUTION:** Build interest in studies.

## FIRST: LET'S LOOK AT THE BARRIERS

1. **Hunger.** If you are hungry don't expect to be able to sit down and study. However, you also cannot expect to be able to study after eating a large meal.
2. **Fatigue.** You can't concentrate for long when you are tired. At test time, some students prefer to rise early in the morning rather than to stay up late studying for exams. This way the period of forgetting is reduced while the period of physical efficiency is at its peak.
3. **Distractions.** Distractions take many forms. They may be internal or external. The most common external distractions are noise and motion. Inner distractions differ from person to person and include thoughts and feelings that compete for your attention. Only you can identify your own distractions and enact solutions to reduce them. Take responsibility for what you do. Don't blame others for your not studying. Set up a learning environment that is as free of distractions as possible.



## SECOND: LET'S LOOK AT HOW TO BUILD CONCENTRATION

1. **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. You may also write some questions that you think will be answered through the reading. This will focus your attention.
2. **Set a goal.** Be specific in 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 objective for your study time. Otherwise, how do you know when you are done?
3. **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 get up to get something, you break your concentration.
4. **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 from time to time. Read for a period of time, then switch to taking notes or reciting aloud. By doing this, you will find that you won't tire as easily.
5. **Prevent daydreaming.** Everyone daydreams. 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. A good way to start again is to review rapidly what you have covered. If you are unable to refocus your thoughts, then perhaps you should concentrate on the 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. You may also need to stand up and walk around, get away from your books. The physical act of standing up helps bring your thinking back to the task at hand. Ultimately you will need to learn to control daydreaming in order to build your concentration.
6. **Relate learning.** You need to make meaningful associations between what you are learning and what you know. This way your learning becomes meaningful and is more readily recalled in the future.
7. **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 time is up.

8. **Pace yourself.** Trying to do too much too fast destroys concentration. When the assignment is long or involved, it is best not to attempt to complete it at one sitting.
9. **Organize the assignment.** One major reason students cannot concentrate is that they often have nothing to concentrate on. If your approach to the assignment is unplanned, that in itself may become a distraction. You need to organize the assignment into a series of specific tasks. By previewing the material, first you are better able to organize the assignment.

Concentration takes practice! Practice suggestions 1-9 on a regular basis.