

How to study - Effective study

✓ Desire for learning

The first thing study demands from you, is your interest in it, your willingness or more exactly your thirst for learning. It is the desire or love of student for study which enables her to sit to study for hours and learn more and more. You should have the desire to learn. Desire to learn enables you to sacrifice for study and manage time for study. It enables you to study anywhere, any time. It creates a sense of responsibility in you about study, a sign of success. It puts you in sense of competition to learn more and more. It makes you generate new ideas and techniques for study, how to study effectively, how to concentrate, how to manage time for study. In short, it makes study your habit. If you don't have the desire or the thirst for learning, you study just to pass the exam, such study is no use because you take it as a burden on you. With such study you can just pass the exam with low grades or sometime you even fail. Aim of study is to get distinction in exam with high grades, which is only possible if you have the love or thirst to learn. Some students have this quality as in-born quality. Others adopt it by practice.

✓ Purpose of reading – what we read for

Reading is not only to utter the words of a lesson. Running on sentences uttering the words only and not picking what it says, is just wastage of time. There is purpose behind reading. The purpose of reading is to learn and understand so that we can use it ourselves. Reading is a brain-using activity. Reading means to get the main idea which is presented by author in the lesson. You should also use a high-lighter to highlight important part of your lesson, a sentence or paragraph. You may have to read a lesson three or four times. Once you are done with reading, close your book and write down on paper what you have picked up from reading. Doing so you will observe how much your reading was effective. Some subjects contain more data, scientific laws, principles, formulae, and diagrams etc. It may seem a bit difficult to understand them. But never decide at first glance that it is difficult. Always think that it is easy and think that you are already acquainted with it. Thinking so makes it easier for you to understand. Give it a read. Such subject may need more time reading than the other easy one like literature subject. Similarly never skip a paragraph of lesson or whole lesson thinking it is difficult.

✓ Concentration

When you sit to study, throw off your mind all the irrelevant thoughts which are likely to interrupt the process of your learning. If you are studying as well as thinking about a movie you watched the last night, you can't study properly. Similarly, if you are studying as well as using cell phone for texting to friends, you can't study properly. When you study, think only about what you study. You should be totally focused on your study and cut off from environment while you study. No other thing or thought may interrupt your study. To study with full heed, you should study in surrounding with less distraction. Similarly you should study one subject at one time.

✓ Memorizing

Memorizing is a part of study. By memorizing, I never mean cramming. Cramming should always be avoided because it puts end to creativity. We study different types of subjects containing different type of data. We learn it and we need to have sketch of that learning in

our mind for reproducing it in exam in our own words. In a subject, there may be some information which needs to be learnt as well as memorized. Like in Biology there are many biological terms which are derived from other languages, or name of medicines. Such name should be memorized. Suppose you are studying chemical process in your book of chemistry. This chemical process comprises of 10 phases, each phase has its scientific name. You study the process and understand it but you have to memorize the scientific name of each phase involved in the process as well as the sequence of phases. If you are writing the whole process in exam and you understand all the process but you don't know the correct names (usually scientific terms) of each phase or the correct sequence of phases, obviously the teacher will give you less marks.

✓ Making and Asking Good Questions

A successful student has the habit of making good questions and asking good questions. When you study a topic, try to produce good questions in it and try to find their answers, either yourself or with the help of teacher. Producing questions in your lesson and finding their answers, eliminate ambiguity or uncertainty in your learning. Here is an example. A student was studying about the chemical structure of atom, he read the sentence "protons reside in the nucleus of atom" he started thinking in his mind "proton have positive charge, bodies having same charge repel each other, then how protons reside in same place, why they don't repel each other?" He made a question "How protons (having same charge) reside in one place, why they don't repel each other? He will definitely use his brain to find its answer or ask teacher for it. By making such question you achieve perfection in your learning.

✓ Learning from discussions

Discussion with others on what you learn makes your learning more effective. When you study a topic and you discuss it with your classmate or a friend, you learn more, because you use your learning in terms of words. When ideas are exchanged on a topic, you come to know if there is some weakness in your learning and you try to improve. Different questions are raised in discussion which build your concepts and you full command over a subject.

✓ Learning from Practical work

Books are main sources of learning. Learning is flourished when you use it practically. Especially, science subjects contain data which need to be worked on practically. You study about many scientific devices and learn how to work on them. But when you go to laboratory and use it practically, you learn with perfection. Using your learning in practice, increases your confidence in your learning. Suppose an accountancy student study "how to make bank statement", she learns it from book but if she goes bank and see how bank statement is made practically, she comes to know many more things related to it which she might have not learnt from book only. So always try to use your learning practically for getting perfection.

✓ How to build concentration for study

Concentration on work is important in all spheres of life. Effective study is only possible if you study with full attention throwing off mind all the irrelevant thoughts which interrupt in the process of learning. Concentration means to throw off mind all unnecessary thoughts and converge all the mental capabilities on a point. Normally the rays of sun do not burn a

paper, because these rays are dispersed but if the rays of sun are converged on paper with the help of lens, it burns the paper at once. Similarly converging your mental capabilities enables productive study – the power of concentration. These are the tips to improve power of concentration.

- Try to get full sleep: Take at least six hour rest for refreshment and relaxation of your mind. A fresh mind can concentrate more easily.
- Take regular exercise: Brain takes its nutrients from blood for functioning properly. Physical exercise speeds up blood circulation to brain and brain gets well nourished as well as brain gets rid of waste products. Physical exercise is necessary for enhancing power of concentration.
- Study in a place with no or less distractions: Your study place should be free from such things which may absorb your attention, i.e television, music, changing color bulbs, maps etc. Similarly study in quiet place free from sound distractions.
- Avoid multi-tasking: While you study avoid playing with other things, like you study as well as texting to friends on cell phone or making hair styles or one eye on television and one eye on book. Similarly study one subject in one time.
- Have free mind: Throw off your mind all the irrelevant thoughts while you study. If you are obsessed by a certain idea, try to find a solution to your problem first. Stress makes it difficult to concentrate.
- Fixation of priorities: Fixation of priorities (what should be done first and what should be done next) is very important for having full concentration in your work. If you don't fix your priorities and work haphazardly, it is more likely you start thinking while doing one task "shouldn't I do the other task first as that is more important". This thought will not let you work with concentration. Make time-table for your subject and follow it.
- Take short breaks in long study: If you study for a long time, you become tired and can't maintain concentration on work. You should refresh your mind by taking short breaks to maintain your concentration on study.
- Have interest in your study: Lack of motivation and interest leads to boredom and dividend attention, so develop your interest in your studies.
- Have good breakfast: Your breakfast should contain items with high protein content, carbohydrates and low sugar content. When you get up from sleep, have good diet though normally you take light diet.
- Don't take too much tea or coffee: Tea or coffee has caffeine that gives you more strength for sometime but soon leaves you sluggish.

How to prepare for Examination

✓ Planning and Time management

A well-known saying is “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail”. Planning and time management is a key to success. It helps you to complete your course in time and save time for revision. If you don't plan and study haphazardly, there are more chances that you may not be able to complete your course before exam. How a student can plan properly? It is easy. First of all, see that how many subjects are included in your course. How many chapters, lessons and exercises are there in each subject? How much time is available for completing your course? Paste your plan and time table on wall in front of your study chair or study place. Start to follow it.

✓ Regular classes and studies – perseverance

Regularity and perseverance are basic elements of effective study and signs of successful student. Study should always be kept maintained. Study for a day and giving up it for some days and then starting again, is not a good way. You must study regularly (without pauses of days) in order to succeed. Regular study helps you in two ways. First it relieves you from wastage of time and second, the most important one, you have food for thought in your mind from previous lesson or topic which helps you in learning the next lesson or topic easily. All the lessons are inter-related. You should study regularly so that you have your previous learning fresh in your mind which helps in learning next lesson with perfection and in less time comparatively. Similar is the case of attending classes.

✓ Making Good Notes

Making useful and helpful notes is important part of your preparation for Examination. It helps in fast learning and fast revision. It saves your time when you read it in future. Notes can be made from many sources but the main source is • Books and guides.

Be focused on ideas of your lesson while you study. Read each sentence with full heed and extract from them the important and helpful information, and main ideas. Write it on a paper. Finally shape your notes in a good way so that it can be effectively used in future for re-learning and revision.

✓ Review - Revision

Revision is an indispensable part of preparation for exam. Revision helps learning to mature. You complete your course and you learn well but it is not the end of it. You should revise it again and again. It is a fact, if you study a chapter well and don't revise it, the learning you have in your mind from first study will vanish with the passage of time. If you don't revise for a month, it is more likely you may forget it after a month or two. It needs to revise it again and again for keeping it in mind for a long time. Revision does not take much time because you have already learnt it but you revise to refresh your learning. Another advantage, each time you revise you learn more and you get new ideas.

✓ Study all – Avoid selective study

Selective study is a risk-taking activity for a student. Sometimes, students think that some topics are more important than others. They usually consider those questions important which were frequently repeated in the previous exams. They prepare those topics only which they think are important and skip the others. As a consequence, they get low grades in exam because they are asked those question which they skipped, thinking they are not important. Remember, exam is given in entire course not in selected areas of your course. Every lesson and every topic is equally important. You should be fully prepared. It is the will of test-maker that she can select any part of the course for giving question in exam.

✓ Review Some Pre-tests

Pre-tests are these tests which are taken before the main exam on monthly basis or weekly basis. Pre-tests play vital role in your step by step preparation for exam. It tells you how much are you prepared for main exam. It shows which areas in book need more study. You come to know about your weaknesses. You learn how to attempt questions in paper, how to answer in a good way to get high marks. It also eliminates your stress for your main exams because you get acquainted with solving question papers.

✓ Always be in state of examination in normal days

The days of examination are wonderful. We have gap of one or two days for each paper during exam. We revise and prepare the whole subject in only one or two days for coming paper. Normally it seems very difficult. It is very easy because in exam we are in a state of worry that we may get low marks in the paper and that's why we study more in little time. Frankly speaking, that study is very productive as well. Own this state of exam in normal days if you want to enhance your study outcome in little time. Study as you have to take test in it tomorrow. Try to do more in little time. Try to speed up your study.

✓ Preparation in days of examination

The session for preparation ends. Finally, the days approach, for which you started preparation, "the days of exam". It is natural students get a little bit tensed in the days of examination though they are fully prepared. A little bit stress is good because it plays positive role. But never let your stress overcome you which makes hindrance in your preparation either. Have confidence in yourself and revise your subject for coming paper. By now, you have learnt a lot, you have full command on all subjects because you have undergone step by step preparation for exam.

Arrange all the allowed things you need in paper i.e. clip board, pen, calculator (if allowed in some papers), rough work sheet (if allowed). When you have paper tomorrow, never remain vigilant the whole night. Have proper sleep (at least 6 hours). You need fresh mind to attempt your paper.

Where to Study - Place for Study

Generally, you should be able to study anywhere, in crowded bus, in library, in garden or in canteen. But some places are better than others for study. You should study in a place where you can study well and with full concentration. There are few things which you have to consider for choosing place for study.

- ✓ Always study in a same place – your study room

Select a place for your study; it may be your room in home or dormitory. Always study in that very place. Always study in that room. Using same place for daily study makes you habitual of study in that place. By studying in same place, you accept mentally that it is the place of your study. So whenever you go to that place (your study room etc), you will be automatically tempted to study. In the same place, you study with more concentration than changing your place daily because in new place you will come across things which steal away your concentration.

- ✓ Use study-chair and table for your study

Sitting on a chair for study, having book in front of you on your table is best way for study. Studying on chair helps you focus more on your books. You sit alert and active. Never study in a bed or on comfortable sofa. If you lie on a bed and study, sleep is likely to ensue.

- ✓ How should be your study room?

Make sure that your study place is well-lit, properly ventilated, peaceful and neither too hot nor too cold. You should have all your study books and pens on table in your room so that you may not go frequently to fetch books. There should be a clock on the wall which shows you the time.

- ✓ Study in a place with no or less distractions

Your study place should be free from such things which may absorb your attention, i.e television, music, changing color bulbs, maps etc. Similarly, study in quiet place free from sound distractions.

When To Study - Best Time for Study

Study time varies for different students. It depends upon the routine activities of student, time when she sleeps and gets up. Some students like to study in night till morning. Some students prefer early in the morning or evening time. You should be able to study anytime. Consider the following things for choosing your study time.

- ✓ Select the best time according your routine activities.
- ✓ Select the time you can study well and try to avoid other unnecessary things in that time.
- ✓ Study those subjects which need more attention in the time when you are more active and alert. It is usually morning time when you get up and your mind is fresh and relaxed.
- ✓ Follow a time table to utilize your time more productively.
- ✓ Try to get full sleep, whatever your sleeping time is. Rest is essential for good study.

Time Management

Time management means fixation of priorities according to time. Time management comprises following

- ✓ Allocation of time for activities
- ✓ What should be done first and what should be done second
- ✓ How much time should be given to a task according to its importance and nature
- ✓ What is the right time for a task
- ✓ Which tasks should be avoided in order to save time or to identify the activities which lead to wastage of time

Time management is essential in every field of life because time is the precious recourse one has to accomplish a task. A very single moment which passed once will never come back to be availed. Time management helps you do your task in time and utilize your time more productively. It helps you to identify the useless activities which can be avoided and time can be saved. It helps you give proper time to a task and perform the task more efficiently.

Time is a major source for a student. A student does a lot of activities in his daily routine, out of which some (study) are related to his career, some (having food) are essential for his life and some (games etc) are for entertainment or physical fitness. Still some activities have no use and just waste time. Similarly if the activities for entertainment exceeds than enough, it wastes the time of a student like using internet (chatting and emails for recreation) for hours, playing games for hours, watching movies for hours or listening to music for hours. Such activities are called “distracters” which distract one from one’s real purpose.

Games and physical exercise are important for a student because it refreshes her mind and it keeps her physically and mentally fit, but games’ time should not exceed than sufficient. It may waste your time. No one wastes time intentionally. Time is always wasted in insensible way. That’s why a student does not feel when she wastes time but she realizes it in the days of exam. So it is better to utilize the present time more effectively than crying over past in future. If a student wastes time it means he is careless about his study or he does not know how to manage time. So you should know about the importance of time. You should learn how to manage time.

How to manage time for study?

Time management comprises various steps. Time management is not only to allocate for different subjects but also to identify right time for each subject, how much time should be given to different subject and to identify the distracters which become causes of wastage of time. Take a pen and sheet. Write all the activities you do in your daily routine. Calculate how much time you have for your study and other activities. Determine how much time a subject can take in your total study time. See that which subject need more time.

Relieving Exam Stress

It is natural that students get stressed in the days of exam, regardless of how much they are prepared for exam. Exam stress varies for different students. Usually the students who are less subjected to exam stress are those who have made full preparation throughout the whole session and are confident of their high grades. The students who are not well prepared for exam may be more stressed in the days of exam. Exam stress is the worry of "If I fail in exam". This worry will not let you study for exams and affects your study adversely. You should know how to cope with exam stress. A little stress is good that keeps you motivated but don't let the exam stress overcome you because

- It hinders study of student. A student cannot concentrate on her study or sometimes she may even close her book because she can't study due to stress.
- A fully prepared student, who needs just one time revision for paper, becomes unable to revise her course.
- While solving the paper, student cannot concentrate on paper, she may write wrong things and she may leave some questions un-attempted.
- It reduces your grades in exam.
- It can become cause of the illness of a student (like diarrhea etc.)

Here are few tips about how to relieve exam stress. Read them and understand them, it will really help you.

- ✓ Think if you study only in the little time of exam, you can get good grades

Suppose you are not well prepared for exam because you have not studied throughout the whole session. You should think that if you study only in the little time (one or two days for each exam), you can get good marks. Such self encouragement can reduce your stress as well as enables you to study well. I have seen many students who are not prepared for exam but utilizing the little time of exam they get very high marks.

- ✓ Visualize success instead of negative thoughts of failure

Have the hope of success. Never think of failure during the days of exam. If you are thinking about failure during the exam, it means you are inviting stress to overcome you. Never think

like “what if I fail in the coming paper”. Have positive thoughts and say to yourself that exam is very easy and I will do well in exam because I am an intelligent student.

✓ Don't ask your friends about their preparation

Usually students call their friends to ask about their preparation during exam. It is not good because if you ask your friend and you come to know that she has revised and prepared more chapters than you, you start thinking, “oh I am lagging behind, I may not be able to complete the chapters before papers”. It increases your stress. Similarly, if your friend is more stressed and you come to know about, his stress influences you as well.

✓ Think about the time you have utilized for study not about the time you have wasted In exam, never think about the time you have wasted. It is no use now, so forget about it now. Think about the time you studied, it will give you courage and stress will not overcome you.

✓ Take things light – Be Brave

If thought of failure is disturbing too much, don't lose temper and think “No one is going to shoot me if I fail in exam. Think I am trying my level best no matter if I fail. Think that many other students are also appearing for the exam, if the paper will be difficult, it will be equally difficult for all, not for only me. Take things light during exam and start your study rather paying attention to things which increase your stress.

Start your studies right now

Laziness is a curse. Some students shirk work due to their laziness. Such a student says to herself, "I should start my study from tomorrow because it is too late today or I am a bit tired today". But tomorrow, she says again that she will start from the next day. Days are passed in such way but her tomorrow does not come when she will study. Such a student says to herself daily, "I will start my study tomorrow" and saying this daily she passes the whole session till the exam approaches and find no time for study for exam.

She says to herself daily,

- I will start study from tomorrow because I am not in good mood today.
- I will start study from tomorrow because it is very cold or hot today.
- I will start study from tomorrow because I want to watch a movie or I want to go for game today.

It is a common habit of many students, they do not start study because they think that there is a long time remaining for exam and they go on wasting their time.

Effects of such behavior:

- It is a self-satisfactory excuse to say "I will start from tomorrow because I am not in mood to day". In this way you waste your time but you don't feel that you waste your time.
- By saying this to yourself, you never start your study wasting your time throughout your whole session.

If you waste time daily, your course or subjects will become burden to you day by day, which you will not be able to complete in remaining little time.

In exam you will be subjected to exam stress.

Start right now. Some well known English sayings are

- Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today
 - Tomorrow never comes
 - Time and tide wait for none
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- ✓ Don't deceive yourself. Never say that you will start study from tomorrow. Start it from right now, right now it is the right time for study. If you do not start it now, you will start it never, because "tomorrow never comes".
 - ✓ Start it from now. Don't wait for ideal situation. Don't say that you are not in good mood or it is cold or hot today and you cannot study today. These are all excuses to shirk work. You are student, you have to prefer your study over every other activity. You have to make the environment for study if it does not let you study; don't wait for ideal environment. If you have some serious illness or a very important work, then you can leave study but simple headache or watching a movie or playing a game should not be an excuse for leaving your study.

How to improve your memory

Good memory is a necessary attribute for brilliant students. Students have to learn as well as memorize things to reproduce these things in their own words in examination. It should be noted that by memorizing I never mean cramming. Student should always avoid cramming because it puts end to creativity. He should understand and learn in a way that he can use that learning himself. But still a part of study needs to be memorized. A science student has to understand scientific processes in her science books as well as make sketch of steps involved in these steps. Such learning requires good memory. Let me tell you how to improve your memory.

- ✓ Associate new information with old information

When you study and you pick new information, associate it with another formation, which you have already learnt. Making such relation between same information will help you remember things easily.

- ✓ Make image of data in your mind

Try to make a sketch of information in your mind. When you read something, think for a while draw its picture in your mind. In this way you transform data into memorable image.

- ✓ Make short formulae or short sentences for complex data

It is a nice tactic if you have to memorize complex data or many steps involved in a process in its sequence. In this way, you have to make a short word or sentence contain first alphabets of each idea.

Example

Suppose you study trigonometry, there are complex formulae, which can confuse you in exam if you don't memorize them. See these formulae given below.

$\text{Sin} = \text{Perpendicular}/\text{Hypotenuse}$

$\text{Cos} = \text{Base}/\text{Hypotenuse}$

$\text{Tan} = \text{Perpendicular}/\text{Base}$

Make a sentence for it to memorize it easily, we make a sentence "some people have curly black hair through properly brushing"

The first three words in this sentence are for first formula, next three words in sentence are for second formula and last three words in sentence are for last formula.

See first three words of sentence Some People have: first alphabets of these three words are S, P H. where "S" stand for Sin, "P" for perpendicular and "H" for Hypotenuse.

Next three words: Curly black hair: first alphabets of these three words are C, B, H where "C" stands Cos, "B" for base and "H" for hypotenuse and it makes 2nd formula.

Last three words: Through Properly brushing: It give us three alphabets T, P and B where "T" stands for Tan, "P" stands for perpendicular and "B" for base. It make the 3rd formula $\text{Tan} = \text{Perpendicular}/\text{Base}$

Example

You have to memorize the name of four phases of MITOSIS (cell division process) in its right sequence which are 1-Prophase, 2-Metaphase, 3-Anaphase, and 4-Telophase. Make a word or two words like "PMA Test" (a test for army selection). From this word "P" stands for Prophase, M stands for Metaphase and "T" (first alphabet of test) stands for Telophase.

Reviewing

If you study a topic and forget this topic after some days, don't worry, it is common. You should review your study again and again to remember it for long time. If you study in morning, it is good to you review it in night. You should at least review a topic after every week.

- ✓ Reading aloud and writing.

Some students remember things by reading aloud or writing the study stuff. Practice it, it can help you.

- ✓ Mental Exercise

Try mental exercise daily. It sharpens your mind. It strengthens neural connections in your brain. There are different activities by which you can exercise your brain. Like doing difficult arithmetic calculations with help of your mind, puzzle games, solving a questionnaire where you have to use your brain. The more you use your brain the better it is.

- ✓ Nutrients for brain

Take nutrients which are rich and good for brain. Nutrient having antioxidant like vitamin C, and E and beta carotene, vitamins B, omega-3 fatty acids and folic acid etc, are good for brain. Add 3 to 5 Almonds in one glass of milk, keep it for 5 to 6 minutes and drink it daily, it is good for mental health. Apple juice is also good for sharpening brain.

- ✓ Think and accept you can remember

Never say you can't remember. You can remember only if you say that you can remember and accept this mentally.

- ✓ Try to get full sleep

Take at least six hour rest for refreshment and relaxation of your mind so that your mind can work more efficiently.

- ✓ Take regular exercise

Brain takes its nutrients from blood for functioning properly. Physical exercise speeds up blood flow to brain and brain gets well nourished as well as brain gets rid of waste products. Physical exercise is necessary for enhancing memory power.

Making Study Notes

Making good notes is an open secret of success of student. Making notes is a part of preparation for exam. Good Notes ensures high grades in exam.

How to make good Notes

First let me tell, what are the properties of good notes

- ✓ Easily understandable
- ✓ Easily revisable
- ✓ Save time – because you don't have to read book again for learning them
- ✓ Refreshes key points of lecture and book
- ✓ Help to learn how to present answer in answer sheet in befitting way, to get more marks
- ✓ It contains collective information of text book
- ✓ Increase your interest
- ✓ Notes are written in your own hand writing, you feel acquainted to them and you pick up easily
- ✓ It gives you food for thought

There are two steps in making notes: 1) Taking Notes, 2) Shaping them

Taking Notes

- Open your book
- Extract key points from each paragraph and write it down
- Write down the important information from book which helps to remind all the explanation attached to the topic
- Do write the technical terms used in book, you need to memorize these terms so your notes should contain it
- Write down the definitions. Definitions are very much important. So your notes should have them

Shaping Notes

Notes taken from book may not be in proper format as you have to focus on learning as well. The notes you take should be shaped in proper way so that it can be properly used in future. Shaping notes according to the question format of exam helps you present your answer in befitting way. There are different ways to shape notes.

- Writing in points
- Writing in paragraphs
- Making diagram, tables or chart

Concentration

We all have the ability to concentrate -- sometimes. Think of the times when you were "lost" in something you enjoy: a sport, playing music, a good game, a movie. But at other times

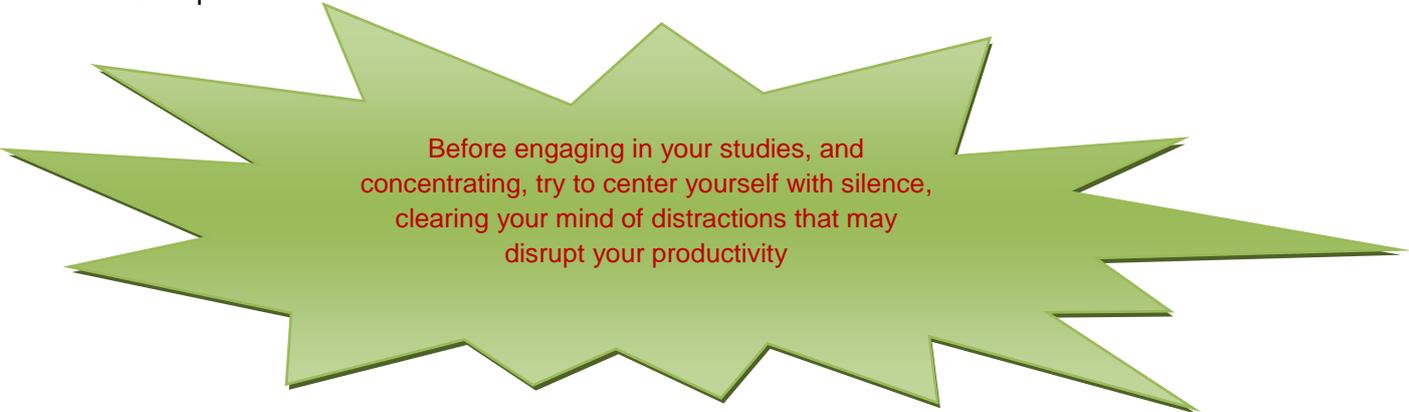
- 🧐 Your mind wanders from one thing to another
- 🧐 Your worries distract you
- 🧐 Outside distractions take you away before you know it
- 🧐 The material is boring, difficult, and/or not interesting to you

The following tips may help. They involve



What you can control in your studies

Best practices



Before engaging in your studies, and concentrating, try to center yourself with silence, clearing your mind of distractions that may disrupt your productivity

What you can control in your studies

- 1) Get a dedicated space, chair, table, lighting and environment
- 2) Avoid your cellphone or telephone
- 3) Put up a sign to avoid being disturbed or interrupted
- 4) If you like music in the background, OK, but don't let it be a distraction
- 5) Stick to a routine, efficient study schedule
- 6) Accommodate your day/nighttime energy levels
- 7) Before you begin studying, take a few minutes to summarize a few objectives, gather what you will need, and think of a general strategy of accomplishment
- 8) Create an incentive if necessary for successfully completing a task, such as calling a friend, a food treat, a walk, etc
- 9) For special projects such as term papers, design projects, long book reviews, set up a special incentive
- 10) Changing the subject you study every one to two hours for variety
- 11) Vary your study activities
- 12) If you have a lot of reading, try the SQ3R method
- 13) Ask yourself how you could increase your activity level while studying? Perhaps a group will be best? Creating study questions?
- 14) Ask your teacher for alternative strategies for learning. The more active your learning, the better
- 15) Take regular, scheduled breaks that fit you

- 16) Do something different from what you've been doing (e.g., walk around if you've been sitting), and in a different area
- 17) Give yourself a reward when you've completed a task

Best Practices

- 1) You should notice improvement in a few days, but like any practice, there will be ups, levels, and downs
- 2) Be Here Now: This deceptively simple strategy is probably the most effective. When you notice your thoughts wandering astray, say to yourself "Be here now" and gently bring your attention back to where you want it. For example, you're studying and your attention strays to all the other homework you have, to a date, to the fact that you're hungry. Say to yourself "Be here now". Focus back on subject with questions, summarizing, outlining, mapping, etc. and maintain your attention there as long as possible. When it wanders again, repeat "Be here now" and gently bring your attention back, and continue this practice, repeatedly. It will work!
- 3) Do not try to keep particular thoughts out of your mind. For example, as you sit there, close your eyes and think about anything you want to for the next three minutes except cookies. Try not to think about cookies...When you try not to think about something, it keeps coming back. ("I'm not going to think about cookies. I'm not going to think about cookies.") You might do this hundreds of times a week. Gradually, you'll find that the period of time between your straying thoughts gets a little longer every few days. So be patient and keep at it. You'll see some improvement!
- 4) Do not constantly judge your progress. Take it easy on yourself. Good practice is enough to say that you did it, and that you are on the road. The mind is always different and the practice unfolds over time with many ups and downs.
- 5) Worry or Think Time: Research has proven that people who use a worry time find themselves worrying 35 percent less of the time within four weeks. Set aside a specific time each day to think about the things that keep entering your mind and interfering with your concentration. When you become aware of a distracting thought, remind yourself that you have a special time to think about them, let the thought go, perhaps with "Be here now", keep your appointment to worry or think about those distracting issues. For example, set 4:30 to 5 p.m. as your worry/think time. When your mind is side-tracked into worrying during the day, remind yourself that you have a special time for worrying. Then, let the thought go for the present, and return your focus to your immediate activity.
- 6) Maximize your energy level: When is your energy level at its highest? Study your most difficult courses at your high energy times. When are your low energy times? Work on your easier courses or the ones you enjoy the most. Most students put off the tough studies until later in the evening when they become tired, and it is more difficult to concentrate. Reverse that. Study hard subjects at peak energy times; easier ones later. This alone can help to improve your concentration
- 7) Visualize: As an exercise before you begin studying, think of those times when concentration is not a problem for you--no matter what situation. Now try to feel or image yourself in that situation. Recapture that experience immediately before your studies by placing yourself in that moment. Repeat before each study session.