

CONCENTRATION AND YOUR BODY

The pressures of deadlines, exams, and work can make us forget our body's needs, but if we do, our performance may suffer as we become listless, disinterested, or even panicked.

Routine habits

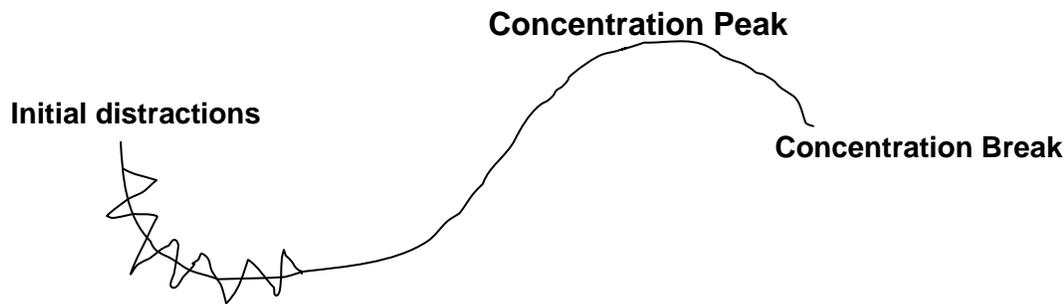
It helps to maintain good habits of diet, exercise, sleep, and rest throughout the semester.

- Take 10 minutes to relax before meals, slowly eat well-balanced food, and make mealtime an opportunity to calm down.
- Hunger distracts us – feed yourself.
- Nutrition effects concentration – greatly – breakfast should always include protein. EX: OJ, toast or oatmeal, and an egg, yogurt, or nuts.
 - With protein blood sugar rises slowly and is maintained all morning and then again after lunch. This helps maintain good blood sugar levels all day.
 - Without protein for breakfast, blood sugar drops quickly below pre-breakfast levels, and does the same after lunch no matter what you have for lunch.
- Sleep 7 to 9 hours per 24 hour period. Have a routine sleep schedule.
- Fight off sleepiness during study periods. Take frequent 5 minute breaks, very activities, pace, etc.
- Like a “second wind” of physical energy, we will get a second wind of mental energy if we just stick with it for a short time. This second wind will be a new layer of mental energy that enables you to continue studying with new alertness and clarity with relative effortlessness.
- Choose an exercise you enjoy--jogging, swimming, yoga, etc. Make it a regular part of your week.

Study Habits

Each time you study, plan to use your body to help you concentrate.

- Create a suitable study environment with a straight but comfortable chair that fits you, a desk with all the equipment you need, and sunlight or indirect light that is bright enough but doesn't glare
- Study according to your biorhythms: schedule your difficult subjects when you are at peak mental efficiency (after 10 p.m.? early morning?) and plan to do physical tasks, such as compiling a bibliography at the library, when you are at low mental efficiency.
- Know and respect your own concentration span. When you begin a study session, gather your materials, relax, plan what you want to accomplish, and energetically begin. When your mind wanders, call yourself back to the task, but when you find yourself consistently daydreaming or working without comprehension, take a break for 5 or 10 minutes. Listen to music, talk to someone, take a walk, do a chore, daydream, or relax. Then begin studying again



How long can you concentrate? 10 minutes? 30 minutes? 2 hours?

Deadlines and tests

During deadline and test stress, don't let pressure cause you to ignore your body.

- Make every minute count by turning meals and time spent traveling by bus, car, or walking into opportunities for relaxation and exercise.
- During long study sessions, drink lots of fluids, increase caloric intake, and eat frequent small meals. Use coffee, tea, and soft drinks to stay awake unless they will keep you from sleeping at night.
- Plan breaks to include light exercise to help you stay awake and revitalize.
- Don't oversleep! If you must cut down on sleep, try going to bed at your regular bedtime and getting up early.
- If you are keyed-up or anxious, relax yourself periodically. If you can't sleep, exercise during the day, and plan to relax for 30 minutes before you go to bed.

Some information adapted from *How to Study in College* 2nd ed. Walter Pack 1974
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