

Learning Café Quick Study Tips

CONCENTRATION

Being able to focus during both class & study times is essential in order to reach short & long term goals. What measures can be taken to improve concentration skills within & outside of the classroom?



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How Do I Improve My Concentration In The Classroom?

- **Check your motivation & goals.** Ask yourself, “Why am I here? What do I hope to accomplish? How does this course fit with my goals?”
- **Come prepared.** The more you know, the more connections you’ll find. Before class, preview & read required materials, review the previous day’s notes, & make predictions about upcoming lectures.
- **Take notes.** Note taking is an effective way to help stay focused. It requires that you be involved in the lecture both physically & mentally.
- **Predict what the instructor will say next.** You may not always accurately anticipate what the instructor may say; however, you will be helping yourself to concentrate on the topic being discussed.
- **Ask questions.** Formulating questions keeps your mind on the subject under discussion. It also helps you check for understanding or clarify unclear concepts.
- **Maintain a positive attitude.** You may not enjoy a course, but self-defeating attitudes & behaviors will not help you successfully reach your goals. When you find yourself thinking negatively about the course, your instructor, or yourself, rephrase your thinking to be positive & constructive.
- **Sit near the front of the class.** You need not sit right in the front row; however, you will be less tempted to daydream & more likely to interact in class activities. You will also be less likely to be distracted by other things going on in the room.
- **Make eye contact with the instructor.** By looking at the instructor, you will focus your attention.
- **Adjust your posture.** If you slump or sit through class in a passive position, you are not as likely to get involved.

How Do I Improve My Concentration While Studying?

- **Establish a mind set.** It is important to be in the right frame of mind to study. Establishing a serious study space helps create that mind set, but you must also consider your motivation & mental state as well. If you don't intend to learn, you won't.
 - Set goals for yourself; when you reach them, reward yourself.
 - Study at the time of day when you are at your best.
 - Alternate subjects during study sessions. You will remain more focused if you vary your activities about every hour. Start with your most difficult subject when your concentration level is high.
 - When studying, you may find you are spending a lot of mental energy trying to remember to do some of the other things in your life. If you write them down, it frees your mind to concentrate on your studies.
 - Keep track of your attention span. By becoming aware of when & how often your mind wanders, you can begin working at reducing your daydreaming & increasing your focus.
 - Take ten minute breaks every hour or so; it is impossible to concentrate effectively for long stretches of time.
- **Establish a study area.** A quiet, serious space like a desk at home or a library carrel on campus is most appropriate for studying. When you regularly go to that space, your mind will readily become prepared to read or focus on your coursework.
- **Control the level of noise around you.** It may not be necessary, or even desirable, to maintain complete silence; however, it is probably not productive to have loudness either. Try differing amounts of background noise or music to see which suits you best.
- **Pay attention to your physical state.** If you are hungry or tired, or if you need to use the washroom or get some exercise, you will likely have difficulty focusing on your studying. Take care of these needs before you start to study or take a break during your study.

For more information on any of the suggestions given here, please visit the Learning Café, located in the library (CE1340) / 403-382-6952 / learningcafe@lethbridgecollege.ca Or sign up for a Student Success Workshop!