Office for Undergraduate Studies – Strategies for Becoming a More Successful Student at UTEP
Spring 2012

Improving Your Concentration and Memory

- **Create a study environment** - have all the materials you need, a comfortable chair, a solid table, and good lighting ready so that when you go there, your brain knows it’s time to study!

- **Plan for the best times** – Are you a morning person or a night person? Do your hardest most important studying at the time when you are the most alert. Save things like copying notes, making index cards, and organizing your papers for times when you are not at your peak.

- Set **specific, attainable study goals** for each study session – Don’t try to do everything in one sitting. Break your work up into 45 – 50 minute blocks. Finish one, take a small break, then start another.

- **Break up study sessions** by varying subjects, this builds in variety and interest. It’s less boring to your brain and helps you remember things longer.

- **Don’t mix work and play** – When you are going to work – work. Concentrate and get it done. The faster and better and better you do your work, the more time you’ll have to relax later.

- **Make the most of work periods** – have a strong intent to concentrate and focus. You’re there to study so tell yourself that you’re going to study and believe in the power of positive thinking.

- **Make the most of rest periods** - do something different. Every hour or so while studying, get up and take a 5 – 10 minute break. Stretch, get a drink of water, look out the window. You’ll be surprised at how refreshed you feel when you go back to the desk.

- **Start with short study periods** and slowly build to longer times. Just like any exercise, it may take a while to get in peak form. Start with 20 – 25 minute blocks and really concentrate during that time. Add a few minutes each day until you can really focus for an hour without losing your concentration.

---

**Memory**

- **Pay attention while you are learning.** If you act interested in the material it will stay in your head better. Think about why you are learning this material.

- **Have a strong intent to remember.** A positive attitude will help remember information.

- **Preview – Read – Review.** The more you increase your basic knowledge, the easier it is to build new knowledge upon this. Associate new knowledge with old knowledge.

- **Prioritize.** You can’t learn everything. Determine what’s most important and start there.

- **Visualize the material.** Close your eyes and get a picture of the material in your head. Also picture the book, the bolded words, and the figures. Lock in those images. This technique uses a different part of...
your brain than reading or listening. It gets the information in your brain in more than one place.

Make sure you get the information right the first time. Unlearning stuff you spent time learning is not only frustrating, it’s a waste of good time.

Don’t forget today’s material. If you don’t recall or review work within 24 hours, you will forget more than half of it. Review today’s notes tonight.

Break up study over several days. Shorter more frequent study sessions are preferable to fewer but longer study sessions.

Be sure you fully understand the material. Can you explain it to someone else? Just the process of trying to understand the material is well on the way to memorizing it.

Spot what is to be memorized verbatim. Mark that information in a special way. Try to repeat this material at odd times (while waiting in line, washing dishes, etc.)

Divide and group the material into smaller chunks. Your brain takes things best in little bunches.

Reinforce what you have learned through repetition and use. You will not remember something you don’t use.

Know the difference between what needs to be memorized and what you just have to know generally.

Say it out loud. Memory experts say that verbal recitation is one of the powerful tools for moving information from short-term to long-term memory.

Pick 3 of the above Memory & Concentration tips that sound like something that would help you. Write them down below along with how and when you will incorporate them into your Becoming a More Successful Student Plan.

1.

2.

3.

Power of Positive Thinking: Concentration and Memory

Concentrating on concentrating is important. It helps me remember the stuff I need to remember, saves time (because I don’t have to go back and study it again later), and helps me do better on my assignments. I can learn to improve my memory and that will translate into becoming a more successful student.