

How to develop better focus while studying

Think of it as a three-step process:

- 1) Learn the causes of poor focus and decide which apply to you.
- 2) Understand what you can do to manage/control these factors.
- 3) Develop the habit of focusing.

	1 LEARN THE CAUSES	2 CONTROL THE CAUSES
External Causes	Environmental distractions: TV, chairs that are too comfortable, snacks, other people, etc.	Leave or rearrange a distracting environment. Go to a library or a classroom when you can be less distracted by elements of the environment.
	Noise: music with words, conversations	Train yourself to study away from others and in silence.
Internal Causes	Physical distractions: hunger, drowsiness	Plan to study when you're most alert. Eat a high-protein snack. Do five minutes of light exercise to wake-up.
	Boredom, dislike, disinterest	Find a good reason for taking the class—something that motivates you and sustains your interest; talk with other students and the professor.
	Anxiety about studies	Make sure you know how to study effectively. Put the course in perspective. <i>(Talk to a Learning Specialist at the SLCC for assistance with this!)</i>
	Intimidating study tasks	Break up large tasks into smaller, achievable tasks. Do the most intimidating task first. Give yourself rewards for progress and "punishments" for avoidance.
	Daydreaming	Separate daydreams from studying. When your mind starts to wander, write down the interrupting thought and continue studying. Or, turn away from your book and continue to daydream. When you're ready to read again, do so. The trick is not to try daydreaming and reading at the same time.
	Personal worries	Identify and define the problem and develop a concrete, specific plan to resolve personal worries. Talk with someone who can help: a friend, a counselor, a specialist.

3 Develop the Habit of Focusing

Even if you lapse into old patterns of feeling distracted, keep requiring yourself to concentrate (using the controls outlined above) until you can routinely focus for fifty minutes of every hour when you study.

You may also want to start a mindfulness practice. The improved focus you experience with mindfulness meditation can be applied to other situations, including studying.