



Campus Academic Resource Program

## Improving Concentration

### What is Concentration?

1. Do you believe the power of concentration is an innate gift that some are born with and others are not?
2. Do you believe that the ability to concentrate is hereditary, like the color of one's eyes or hair?
3. The answer to these questions is a categorical NO. *Concentration is a skill that is developed through self-discipline and practice, not a mystical power. It is a habit that requires time and effort to develop and careful planning for consistent success.*

**Concentration is no more than paying attention**--that is, focusing your full attention on the task at hand. Someone once said that the mark of a genius is the ability to concentrate completely on one thing at a time. This is easy if the task is fun and exciting, but it becomes more difficult when you are required to read something that is new and not very interesting to you. At this point your mind begins to wander, and the words on the page remain just words to pass over rather than becoming meaningful thoughts and ideas.

### The Causes of Poor Concentration

**External distractions.** Temptations of the physical world that divert your attention away from the books. They are the people in the room, the noise in the background--the general where and when that you choose for studying. To control these external distractions, create an environment that says, "Now this is the place and the time for me to get my work done."

- Place: Start by establishing your own private study cubicle; it may be the library, on the dining room table, or in your bedroom. Choose a straight chair and face the wall. Get rid of gadgets, magazines, and other temptations that trigger the mind to think of PLAY. Stay away from the bed because it triggers SLEEP. Spread out your papers, books and other symbols of studying and create an atmosphere in which the visual stimuli signal WORK.

- **Time:** To be successful, your study hours must be as rigid and fixed in your mind as your class hours. Leave nothing to chance because too often an unexplained activity never gets done.
- **Schedule:** Weekly activity plan or planner. Analyze your responsibilities and write your **FIXED** activities such as class hours, work time, meal time, and bedtime. Next, think about how much time you want to spend studying and how much on recreation and plug those in. Make a fresh chart for each week and follow. Plan realistically.
- **Ratio:** You need short breaks. Few students can study uninterrupted for two hours without becoming fatigued and losing concentration. Try the 50-10 minute or the 30-14 combination (e.g. work 50 minutes and rest 10 minutes, etc.).
- **Habit:** Forming study habits is similar to developing the habit of brushing your teeth; the important word is consistency. Always study in the same place, at the same times and do not tolerate exceptions.

**Internal distractions.** These are the concerns that come repeatedly into your mind as you try to keep your attention focused on the assignment. They are the questions of self-doubt or the nagging responsibilities on your mind that disrupt your work.

- **Confidence:** Saying: "I'll never pass this course" or "I can't get in the mood to study" is a beginning step toward not being successful.
- **Concentration requires self-confidence:** Getting a college degree is not a short-term goal. Your enrollment indicates that you have made a commitment to a long-term goal. Ask yourself the question, "Who do I want to be in five years?"