

# Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

## IMPROVING CONCENTRATION

### Eliminate Internal and External Distractions:

- **Learn what works for you:**

You can control feelings of hunger, tiredness, and discomfort. You may not be able to control outside noise, temperature and interruptions, but you can choose the tools that work for you by knowing what you need.

- **Find your best study environment:**

The best place to study is the place where you are most able to concentrate. Where are you least likely to be interrupted by people, telephones, or other sounds?

Your study area should be used exclusively for studying. The study area should have comfortable furniture, a chair that supports your back and is not too high or too low for your text or computer, and adequate lighting (avoid shadows). If you study in the Library, sit at a small table in the stacks area, away from the traffic and noise.

- **Use a study strategy:**

Manage your time. Create a regular study schedule and stick to it.

Break your semester assignments into smaller, manageable tasks. Allocate enough time for each task. Plan to read a certain portion of your textbook in ten minutes, then review main points. Read difficult passages aloud and with expression.

Don't take notes or underline while you are reading. Read your text; place a check beside the material you want to note. Write your notes one section at a time. Re-read your notes after you have written them.

Study your most difficult subjects first. If you have two subjects from the same discipline (i.e. math) separate your study of them with a dissimilar subject.

- **Take frequent breaks:**

Reward yourself by taking at least one ten minute break an hour. Get up, move around, relax, think about something else. After your break, renew your study by looking over what you have already read.

- **Study from your own materials:**

If you must copy notes from someone else, rewrite notes in your own prose. Ask for clarification on troublesome areas. Use your own textbook. Using someone's underlined text for study is not only distracting, it can also be misleading. If you buy a used text, be sure that the text is still clear and legible.

*See other side for more>>>*

For more information, visit or call your nearest Rutgers Learning Center, or visit our website:<http://rlc.rutgers.edu>

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Armitage 231  
856/225-6442

College Ave  
Kreeger LRC  
732-932-1443

Cook/Douglass  
Loree 124  
732-932-1660

Livingston  
Tillett 111  
732-445-0986

Newark  
Conklin Hall 126  
979-353-5608

## **Eliminate other causes of poor concentration:**

- **If your mind wanders while reading:**

Create a purpose for reading. Ask a general question, or form an opinion. Check the text for an answer or response. Turn each subheading into a question to be answered by the paragraph(s). Try to avoid looking up new vocabulary until after you have read the text. You are likely to remember new words or key phrases if you see them used in context. Make sure that you use new vocabulary in your notes.

*Use SQ4R Method for Reading Textbooks*

- **If you can't find time to study:**

Make a list of all your time commitments: classes, employment, organization, social obligations. Assign two hours of reading/study time for each hour of class. Be sure to mark off leisure time. Learn how to trade-off time when "something comes up."

*Use time management grids to plot your time commitments*

Use semester, monthly, weekly and major assignment planners to project your time. Have you taken on more obligations than you can meet? You may have to cut job hours or social hours, or you may have to consider dropping a class if you have a heavy course load.

- **If you procrastinate:**

It may be because you don't understand the learning strategies necessary to be successful in the course. Call a friend, discuss the assignment, objectives, and how the new information relates to the course overall. Try challenging yourself to complete so many pages in so many minutes. You may also not understand "why" this course is important -- **Ask questions!** Learn to see each assignment as personal enrichment; you're doing it for yourself!

- **If your assignments seem too long or too difficult:**

Plan semi-weekly reviews with a friend or with a study group. Break weekly assignments into smaller tasks that are accomplished one at a time. Write questions about areas of confusion. Bring questions to class; ask your professor to explain. Worrying about completing the assignment only diminishes concentration. Start it, Do it, Get it done!

- **If it's difficult for you to take notes and listen:**

Learn how to take notes. Sit in front of class. Watch professor's body language. Write down anything written on the board. Listen for and write down main points; skip a line between each. Notes are an abbreviation (not a reproduction) of the lecture.

*Use Listening and note taking handout*

- **If your mind goes blank on tests:**

Prepare adequately for tests. Get tutoring as soon as you realize you don't understand the material. Avoid breaking your concentration. Build on success. Answer what you know; skip over difficult questions. Save the hardest questions for last. Learn breathing and relaxation techniques.

*Use test preparation, test anxiety, and reducing stress handouts*