

How to Create Focused Study Time

There are many good reasons to not want to study these days. But there are also many good reasons to prioritize your studies. Making time to focus on your studies is a way to remain true to yourself, the people and causes you care about, and contributions you wish to share with the world. The ability to maintain focus is a skill that will serve you for all of your life.

The question is, how can we keep focused on complex tasks like studying when the life presents us with so many challenges? While each person needs discover their own answer to that question, there are methods that many people have found helpful.

Part One: Identify Priorities & Engage in Self-Care

Every day we make choices about what we do- and don't do. Sometimes it can be hard to know what **actions to prioritize**. During such times, it can be helpful to **visualize your long-term goals**. Who do you want to be in one year, five years, or twenty years? What are the actions you can take right now that will help you become that person? Identifying **what steps you can take right now** to accomplish your goals is a powerful motivator.

If you struggle to identify what task to prioritize, one helpful technique is to take a moment before going to sleep and **write down what task you absolutely must accomplish the next day**. Then write your plan for how you will accomplish it. Leave it at your bedside so it is the first message you will receive that day.

Just as it is important to identify your priorities, it is vital to **identify your self-care needs** too. Sufficient sleep, eating a healthy diet, engaging in exercise, and socializing with friends and family are some essential aspects of a healthy life. These activities will also make it feel easier and more rewarding to concentrate on your studies.

Additionally, including time in your schedule for exercise, socialization, and relaxation will help you to **space out your focused study time** in a way that optimizes learning. While cramming might feel effective in the short-term, evidence has proven that spacing out study sessions leads to learning that is longer lasting.

Part Two: Create Focused Study Time

Scheduling **focus blocks** into your day is a great way to create focused study time. A focus block is a period of time that your designate to accomplishing a single complex task or a group of simpler related tasks.

It is best to plan your focus blocks during **the time of day when your energy is at its peak**. Think of a successful study session you recently had. Was it during the morning, afternoon, or evening? How long did it go on for? Only you will understand best when you should schedule your focus blocks and how long you should schedule them for.

Identifying what **study environment** works best for you is also important. Most people find that they study best in well-lit environments where they are able to sit or stand up rather than lay down. Some people benefit from changing their study environment or alternating between different study environments.

No matter what study environment you choose, it's important to **limit distractions**. This includes limiting text messages, emails, or access to social media and the internet. While study buddies can be excellent for learning, it is important to be aware of how effectively you are using the time together. Ambient music or nature sounds can also be a great way to shut out the world for a while.

Part Three: Keep on Track During Focused Study Time

Many people find it helpful to ease into their focused study time with a **pre-study ritual**. This can be something simple like setting up your workspace or taking a few moments to focus on your breath. However, even with the best possible setup, you also probably also find there are times when your mind drifts away while studying. **The following techniques can help you keep focused**. Keep in mind that you don't need to try out all the suggestions at once. Start out with one technique and add others as needed.

For feelings of anxiety, it can be helpful schedule **worry time** outside of your focused study time. During worry time devote ten to fifteen minutes to writing down everything you are currently worried about and then tell yourself not to dwell on any of these things until your next worry session. Make sure not to schedule your worry time right before your focused study time or going to sleep.

If you are feeling down, it can be helpful to **reframe negative thoughts as positive thoughts**. For example, transform a statement like, *I can't learn this Calculus equation, it's too hard*, into, *This Calculus equation is difficult and I am rising up to the challenge*. Writing the positive thought on a piece of paper and displaying it somewhere you can see it while studying can also offer a boost.

Sometimes you might find your thoughts repeatedly drifting away from your study material. In these instances, you could try **writing down a check mark each time you have a distracted thought**. This method has been proven to return students' focus to their studies, and it can also be useful for analyzing if you are studying during the right time of day or in the right environment for you.

When a thought pops in your mind about another task you should do, rather than switching to complete it, **write the task down a piece of paper and tell yourself you will do it after your focus block is over**. Remind yourself that focus blocks are special periods of time that you have reserved for specific tasks, and remember to later reward yourself for maintaining focus and remaining true to your goals.