

24 Ways to Improve Motivation and Concentration

1	Design an adequate environment for yourself. Check lighting, noise, comfort of furniture, etc., in three or four places to determine which spot works best for you.
2	Make sure that you're prepared and have all the tools you need before starting. Have your pen, notebook, calculator, etc., ready to go.
3	Choose a regular time that you study each day so that you set a pattern.
4	Have a special reminder pad for jotting down extraneous thoughts that enter your mind while studying (e.g. calling a friend for lunch).
5	Use a symbol for studying. Choose an item, like a hat, that you put on when (and ONLY when) you are studying or an item that you place on the desk while you study.
6	Relax your body before you start studying.
7	Give yourself an affirmation and/or image that will motivate you.
8	Imagine that your brain is filled with the subject that you are going to study and that there is no room for anything else. See that the entrances to your mind are blocked by that subject.
9	Take two minutes before reading to jot down everything you expect to come up in the text that you are about to read.
10	Employ the SQ3R technique to begin each subject.
11	Break assignments into small step-by-step tasks.
12	Analyze your study skills to make sure that your problem is one of concentration, not faulty study skills.
13	Look for a special interest in each subject for which you do not feel motivated. For example, if Biology does not thrill you but you are interested in keeping your body in shape you may be able to develop an interest in nutrition.
14	Develop a contract for a particular study problem. Decide if you are more responsive to reward or punishment and construct a contract accordingly. For example, decide that for every 10 pages you read, you can listen to music for 10 minutes. Or, if you don't read 20 pages of history, you can't have that candy for your break. Chart your progress over 5 study sessions before you consider making modifications.
15	Set realistic study goals.
16	Solve some of the problems that are interrupting your concentration (go talk to your professor about the lecture you didn't understand).
17	Keep a pencil in your hand while studying so that you can be an active participant in the process.
18	When you find that you are not concentrating, take some action. Suggestions: Make a check mark every time you find your mind wandering; stand up and turn around every time you lose focus.
19	Take a short break after every 20-40 minutes of reading to let what you have just read have a chance to sink in and find its way to connectors and memory storage points in your mind. Don't use these breaks for phone calls, etc., just think about what you've read.
20	Watch your diet. Limit the amount of chemicals (including junk food), sugar, and caffeine you are taking. They can give you a buzz, but that doesn't make you any more alert.
21	Exercise on a regular basis. Try exercising before you study to increase alertness.
22	Get 7-9 hours of sleep per 24-hour period. It doesn't all have to happen at one time.
23	Do not give in to mental fatigue – the kind that goes away when you do something besides studying. Push on and wait for the 2 nd (or 3 rd or 4 th) "wind" that is another stage of alertness that will come if you persevere.
24	Talk about your concentration/motivation problems with a friend and/or make an appointment at the Center for Academic Services.