UNIVERSITY of ARKANSAS FORT SMITH

Academic Success Center
5210 Grand Avenue · Fort Smith, AR 72913
479-788-7675 · asc@uafs.edu · uafs.edu

How to Develop Better Focus While Studying

Think of this process in three steps:

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 routinely.

Focus While Studying	1 LEARN THE CAUSES	2 CONTROL THE CAUSES
External Causes	**Environmental Distractions:** TV, phone, social media, snacks, other people, etc.	Leave or rearrange a distracting environment. Go to the library or study lab with fewer distractions.
	Noise: music with words, loud machinery, annoying conversations, barking dogs	Find a quiet place to study away from distracting noises and annoying conversations
Internal Causes	**Physical Distractions:** hunger, drowsiness, illness, pain	Plan to study when you are most alert. Eat a high-protein snack. Do 5 minutes of light exercise.
	Boredom/Disinterest	Identify a good reason to take the course. Discuss information with peers and instructors. Motivate yourself by previewing information.
	Anxiety about studying effectively	Make sure you know how to study effectively. Put the course into perspective. Meet with an Academic Coach.
	Intimidating study tasks	Break up large tasks into smaller, achievable tasks. Do the most intimidating task first. Give yourself rewards for progress.
	Daydreaming	When your mind starts to wander, write down the interrupting thought and return to studying. Separate daydreaming and studying.
	Personal Worries	Identify and define the problem and develop a concrete plan to resolve your personal worries. Talk with a friend, counselor, or other specialist.

3 DEVELOP THE HABIT OF FOCUSING

Even if you lapse into old patterns of feeling distracted, identify the cause and choose a solution.
Keep returning to the task until you can routinely focus for fifty minutes out of every hour when you study.

Adapted from the Sanger Learning and Career Center, University of Texas, Austin