

Study Time!

From [Kimeiko Hotta Dover](#),

How to Make the Most of It

Time is precious when you're juggling multiple responsibilities. Make the most of what you've got by using your time effectively, developing your concentration skills and dealing with distractions.

Use Your Time Effectively

When are you at your brightest? Are you a morning person or a night-hawk? Are you sleepy and distracted after lunch?

Try to schedule study time during your peaks. Don't waste time when you're less mentally alert - use it to accomplish simple, routine tasks like housework or grocery shopping.

Develop Your Concentration

How long is your concentration span? Find out by recording your start time when you read from a textbook or other course readings. As soon as your mind begins to drift, record the time again.

Try this several times until you can gauge your average concentration span.

Most people take nearly imperceptible "refresher" breaks every few minutes. These may involve simply looking out a window or glancing at a picture on the wall. Breaks of about a minute happen every 20 minutes or so. By the 45 minute mark, most people need to stand up and walk around for a few minutes in order to stay fresh.

One way to improve your concentration is by reading actively: try using a highlighter, making notes of significant points in a notebook, recording questions about items you don't understand, trying to predict what will be on the next page and connecting what you're reading with other things you've read.

Another way to increase your concentration span is to deal with distractions.

Deal with Distractions

Sometimes it seems that distractions are coming at you from all sides, and probably they are. Distractions may be internal - the wanderings of your own mind, or external/environmental. Learning to manage both types is essential.

When random thoughts intrude ("It's John's birthday next week," "We need bread," etc.), don't try to suppress them. Instead, quickly jot them down to consider at another time. Sometimes a memory or a thought that appeared to be unrelated to your reading yields interesting insights into the subject upon later reflection.

Be aware of your optimal study conditions and use this awareness to reduce distractions in the environment. Are you more relaxed with absolute silence, or with classical music in the background? Do you have enough light to read without straining? How is the temperature? Do you need a fan or a blanket to feel comfortable? Is your chair comfortable enough to sit upright, but not so comfortable that it lulls you to sleep? Are there other people around? Have you established time and space boundaries with them that they respect?

Your Unique Optimal Study Environment

When I really need to cram, I have found that I am most focused and productive over breakfast at my local diner.

I am using my time effectively because my energy is at its peak in the morning. The quiet but upbeat contemporary music in the background keeps me energized. Periodic exchanges with my server act as "refresher breaks," and I have no opportunity to get distracted by the two biggest thieves of time in my home: e-mail and housekeeping. Best of all, someone brings me decaf coffee refills!

I have come to look forward to my breakfast study dates with myself. Because they have become an enjoyable habit, I find that I can be focused and productive almost as soon as I sit down.

Of course, studying in a diner is not for everyone. The point is to be open to your unique optimal study environment.

Making the most of your study time means having more time for your many other activities. Good luck!