

mind mapping classes

FOCUS perseverance

LECTURES AMBITION

TIME MANAGEMENT peer coaching

self-knowledge CHALLENGE

STUDYING SUCCESSFULLY

self-discipline persistence context

remembering INDEPENDENCE CRITICAL THINKING

flexible thinking EFFECTIVENESS

learning styles repetitions

making connections exams

How can you study in a concentrated way?

Study conditions

Studying and - at the same time - maintaining your social media network, listening to music and following the news. This kind of multi-tasking seems very efficient. Unfortunately, it doesn't work. If you want to study effectively, you will need to 'turn the rest off'.

Concentration and motivation

In order to study well, concentration is crucial but how do you stay motivated? Concentration begins with motivation. You need to want to know it, want to understand it, want to be able to do it and want to master it (for more tips about motivation see the text *How do I stay motivated?*). Furthermore, it helps to set clear goals when you study. What do you want to learn in the coming hour? Are you going to read only, or are you going to make, for example, a summary in the coming study period? However, you can also improve your concentration by improving the situations in which you study

Many students also want to keep following everything happening outside study while they are studying. The email remains on and pops up now and again, or your mobile vibrates if a new message comes in, which you naturally want to see. However, every time that you are disturbed, it takes eight minutes before your concentration returns.

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A few of these messages and your study period hardly bears any fruit. This can work in the same way with music, especially if voices are sounds to which you are automatically going to listen. If you definitely want to listen to music during studying, then classical baroque music is recommended. This music helps to bring your brain into a state of relaxation, as a result of which you can take in the

maximum amount of information. However, if you would like to get more out of your study period, then everything, with the exception of baroque music, needs to be switched off.

Where do you study?

Where you study can also influence your concentration. If you study at home, there are many distractions that can keep you from your study. You need to stand firm to be able to concentrate well and really stick to your study plan. There is always the temptation to first read the paper before beginning, or to also drink a coffee first, tidy up your room first, because that helps you study better, and to also have lunch before you start, because then that's out of the way....well. Sounds familiar? If you don't study at home, but at the University, the temptations are much less large. Especially if you make an appointment with a fellow student. In that case, you will need to be in time at the University to meet up with your fellow student.

So, one advantage of studying at the University is that you can talk to fellow students about your study programme. Secondly, you are close to the place where knowledge, books, lecturers and the academic world is located. It is good for your connection with the University and it helps you feel more at home at the UvA.

It is also, of course, handy that the distractions and opportunities to procrastinate are more limited while studying in a UvA building, compared to studying at home.

Furthermore, it is fine to concentrate your study efforts in a UvA building, so that you are able to fully relax in your own home and not feel the pressure of thoughts like 'I should be studying'.

Student Services

Student Psychologists' Office-Student Careers Centre-Student Counsellors
Student Service Desk-Office of International Student Affairs

www.uva.nl/studyingsuccessfully

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How many hours should you study?

Some students display great effort by studying for hours on end. Bravo for the discipline, but this is not efficient and effective at all. It turns out that the brain functions better if you take breaks. Therefore, studying a number of hours in a row is less productive than if you take a break within those hours now and again. Your brain can recover again during this break and you can take in more again afterwards. How long can you study in a row? Many students appear to find that a good time span for remaining concentrated is approximately 45 minutes, thus one lecture period exactly. However, 45 minutes does not appear to be manageable for everyone. Work out for yourself what your concentration span is. Time yourself once to find this out. How long in a row can you work in a concentrated way? Maybe you can manage blocks of 30 minutes. It doesn't matter how long it is. Maybe you can eventually stretch out that period.

Important is that you monitor and cherish these study periods, so that you can make full use of your concentration during these study time slots. Take a 10-minute break following every study period and carry straight on after your break (and have a slightly larger break for lunch).

It is, however, useful to know exactly what you want to do per study period. You should, therefore, make a realistic schedule the evening before. Ensure that - except for the study material - your table is clean, so that you are able to focus on what you need for that particular study period.

Active

An active approach to studying is essential to making your study a success. You should not just consume and plod your way through the pages, just because you have to do that. Instead, try to actively read, ask yourself questions and form an opinion for yourself. Therefore, don't study on an automatic

pilot, but develop a helicopter view, seek out connections, analyse and try to grasp the essence. Motivation is essential in order to be able to study actively, just like applying specific study skills (read more about it on our website). Keeping up with this will ensure that you can connect with the study material instead of swimming after it. Connecting actively with the UvA and your study is also possible through academic development, and through participating in study and student associations.

Most important points

- Concentration is crucial if you want to study well.
- Are there a lot of distractions at home and does this lead you to study less? Try then to study at the University!
- Do not study hours in a row, but keep having short breaks. That is how you keep concentrated. .
- Try to study as actively as possible.

Workshops and training

- *De Stapel te lijf* (Tackling the books)

Questions?

Do you still have questions? Email the student counsellor Ans Rekers: a.m.rekers@uva.nl.

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