

Concentration and Your Body

www.utexas.edu/student/utlc

Any college student can understand how the pressure of deadlines, exams, and academic stress might cause you to ignore your body's needs.

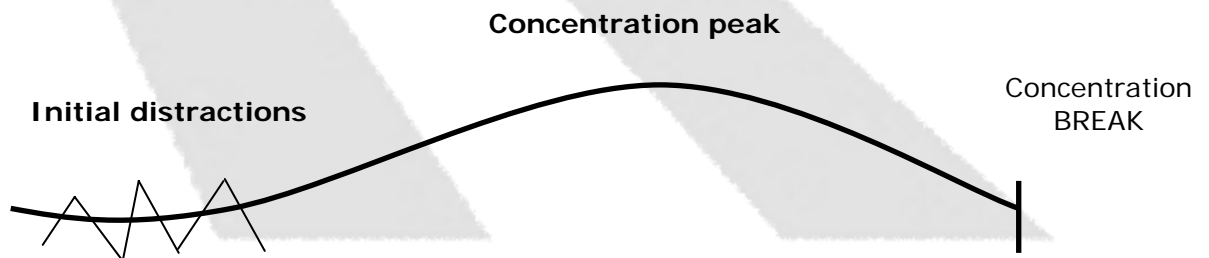
BUT if you don't take care of your body, you may lose interest in your studies; and fatigue may cause anxiety, which can limit performance.

Throughout the semester maintain good habits of diet, exercise, sleep and rest.

- Take 10 minutes to relax before meals; eat healthful food slowly and make mealtime an opportunity to relax.
- Choose an exercise you enjoy—jogging, swimming, yoga, etc.—and gradually make it a part of your day.
- Schedule 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night and plan a regular bedtime. Very few people can function well who consistently get less than 7 hours of sleep per night.

Each time you study plan to use your body to help you concentrate.

- Choose or create a study environment with an upright but comfortable chair (but not too comfortable or too relaxing) that fits you, a desk with all the equipment you need, and daylight or indirect light that's bright enough but doesn't glare on your book or in your eyes.
- Study according to your biorhythms. Work on your most difficult subjects when you are at peak mental efficiency (after 10PM? early morning?) and plan to do easier tasks, like compiling a bibliography at the library, when you are mentally at low efficiency.
- Know and respect your own concentration span. When you begin a study session, gather your materials, relax, plan what you want to accomplish and energetically begin. When your mind wanders, call yourself back to the task. But when you find yourself consistently daydreaming or working without comprehension, stop and **take a break**. For 5 to 10 minutes, check your voicemail, take a walk, daydream, and relax. Then repeat the cycle and begin studying again.



HOW LONG CAN YOU CONCENTRATE?
10 minutes? 30 minutes? 1 hour?

(over)

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During deadlines or stressful exam periods don't let pressure cause you to ignore your body!

- Make every minute count by turning meals, time spent traveling by bus or car, or walking across campus into opportunities for relaxation and exercise.
- During long study sessions, drink lots of fluids and eat frequent, small meals. Use coffee, tea, and soft drinks only in moderation. Some people can't tolerate large quantities of caffeine, so be careful and don't take in too much.
- Plan breaks that include light exercise to help you stay alert and lively.
- Don't oversleep; if you must cut down on sleep, try going to bed at your regular bedtime and getting up early.
- If you're keyed up or anxious, relax yourself periodically. If you can't sleep, exercise during the day and plan to spend 30 minutes relaxing before you go to bed.