



Concentrating and Remembering

Techniques For Concentrating and Remembering

Concentrating takes discipline! Remembering takes practice!

Better Concentration

Any organized attempt on your part to remember more of what you read involves your ability to concentrate on the material you are reading. Intense concentration increases the time you spend attending to the task, an important element in reading. Students who are impulsive in their actions often find it difficult to concentrate for any length of time. Likewise, students who are passive in their approach to learning – those who are not actively engaged and thinking about what they are reading – often fail to get involved with the material enough to concentrate for long periods of time. Here are some ways to improve your concentration:

- ***Improve your attitude*** - Some subjects you will encounter in college may not be of high interest to you. Not only that, some subjects may not seem relevant to your field of study. You must maintain a positive attitude however and realize there is a job to be done! To get your degree, you must pass all these courses, not just the ones you like.
- ***Attend to the task*** - Concentration is a must for successful reading. Yet many distractions may be encountered which lessen your ability to stick to the task and concentrate for long periods of time. A good idea is to keep a "distraction list" of times you were interrupted from concentrating on your reading. The list may include items such as: a) type of book being read; b) number of minutes reading before distraction; c) type of distraction; d) amount of time taken by the distraction; and e) a goal to improve. Concentration is improved if you study when you are the most alert, least tired and in good physical condition. During your scheduled breaks, get up from your desk and walk around or do something physical for about 10 minutes.
- ***Establish a purpose*** - If you first determine a purpose for reading, you then have a reason for thinking as well as for completing the reading assignment. Purpose helps focus your attention and improve your concentration. Write out some questions that pertain to the subject matter you are about to read. For instance, what specifically do you want to know or need to know about this subject? By pre-selecting questions to answer, you become an active participant in the learning/reading process.

Eliminate emotional stress

Rid yourself of impulsive and avoidance behavior due to overwhelming daily stress by keeping a "blame list." This is a list of all the people, situations, circumstances, etc., that you blame for your avoidance behavior. Your blame list can be a benefit in getting you to face your problems squarely. Today's world is highly complex, technocratic, and impersonal. It is no wonder you feel emotionally stressed and drained at times. If you find yourself in the middle of a brief depression or emotional upheaval, do something physical or any activity that is not mind taxing.

In summary,



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- remember to maintain a positive attitude,
- avoid negative people and influences,
- stay active in the learning process without being hyperactive about it,
- keep a list of distractions to help eliminate some impulsive behavior,
- choose carefully your place and time to study, and
- try physical activity to burn off stress and to maintain an alert mind.

Techniques for Remembering

- ***Recitation or Verbalization*** - To transfer information from short-term to long-term, permanent memory, the brain has to perform several functions. The brain by nature is a selective organ, committing to permanent memory only those items it deems are absolutely necessary to retain. You must determine what is important and what is just fluff. If the information is important and needs to be stored, you must perform an essential operation to insure transfer into permanent memory. You help to transfer the information through the recitation process by repeating the information over and over again, or by summarizing the information in your own words. This process of reciting important information enables the brain to permanently store the information. Recitation is the best way to commit large amounts of information to long-term memory.
- ***Sorting Information*** - Sorting large amounts of information into categories can help you remember information more accurately and retrieve information faster. For instance, suppose you had to learn the following concepts for a business class: *tools, labor, trees, wildlife, human resources, minerals, machinery, capital resources, factories, tractors, water, power plants, manpower, natural resource, typewriters*. These concepts would be difficult to learn and remember if you were merely trying to memorize the individual terms. If you sort these terms into major categories, you will place a value on the terms and give them meaning. These individual terms could be held in short-term memory long enough for you to push them into long-term memory by using the recitation process. For example:

Natural Resources	Capital Resources	Human Resources
minerals	tools	labor
water	machinery	manpower
trees	power plants	
wildlife	factories	
	tractors	
	typewriters	



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If you stop your reading often to review and categorize, it will be easier to verbalize the information at the end of the reading, thereby, improving your long-term memory.

- ***Mnemonic Devices*** - Mnemonic aids (from the Greek word meaning 'to bring to mind') are specific memory enhancing techniques which can be useful in learning enormous amounts of seemingly unrelated information. Mnemonic devices are best suited for remembering facts and least helpful in the interpretation of facts or in relating learned material to your life situations.

Some mnemonic examples are:

- rhymes
- acronyms
- catch phrases
- association by image
- peg or tag words