TIME MANAGEMENT

Do you ever sit down to study and your mind starts thinking about your unfinished “to-do list” or your upcoming weekend plans or the meaning of life? Pretty soon you are checking your email, scrolling through social media, or having a long internal dialogue before you remember, “I should be studying!”

Our minds were made to wander. Unfortunately, this can be very inconvenient when we are trying to study.

To improve your focus and concentration, try following these tips:

**Tip 1: Try doing tasks that require the most alertness when you are most alert**

Did you know that our alertness naturally varies throughout the day? As part of our circadian rhythm – the natural process that regulates our sleep and awake cycles – our alertness changes. Try tracking the time of day when your alertness is highest and schedule tasks that require the most concentration when you are most alert. Remember, regular sleep [link to CAPS Sleep Resources] and awake times are an essential ingredient of memory, concentration, and alertness, so don’t forgo sleep for studying.

**Tip 2: Give your mind permission to wander**

Setting aside time each day to allow our minds to wander can spark creativity. In addition, allowing your mind to wander gives it energy to focus on tasks when the time comes. Try taking short study breaks by looking out the window and daydreaming or by taking a walk and just allowing your mind to chatter. You can also try scheduling time for your mind to wander when you are performing tasks that don’t matter too much. Guilt-free mind wandering can be rejuvenating.
Tip 3: Limit distractions and find the right study environment for you
External distractions can interrupt our workflow. To limit distractions, start by noticing what interrupts your focus. For example, try turning off notifications on your phone, limiting your access to apps, or signing out of your email. For some people, having background noise helps them focus, while for others background noise is distracting. Find the study environment that helps you focus the most.

Tip 4: Try mindfulness
Mindfulness, or paying attention to the present moment without judging yourself, has been shown to improve attention. Try starting your mindfulness practice by using an app or by attending our mindfulness drop-in group.

Tip 5: Approach a task with curiosity
When something is new and interesting, our ability to stay engaged increases. Try to be intentionally curious about the task you are doing. Cultivating a sense of curiosity about something that you are studying is what learning is all about after all!