

DISTRACTIONS

Internal Distractions



Self-Doubt

Thinking that you won't be able to succeed is one of the biggest study distractions. Why try if you're just going to fail?

The fix: Banish that self-doubt with positive affirmations. Say things like, "This is difficult material, but I know I can do it," or "I am successful at the drums/track and field/drama, so I can be successful at learning this, too." You'll be surprised how much good can come from being your own cheerleader, and how much easier it is to stay focused.



Anxiety

Test-taking anxiety can cause real stress when studying for a big exam. Students actually report increased heart rate, headache, and even nausea while studying for a major test.

The fix: Try one of these three things to overcome test anxiety: (1). Take 2 minutes at the beginning of your study session and just focus on breathing calmly. (2). Play relaxing, soothing music while you review your notes. (3). Break down your study time into smaller study segments, so you're not overwhelmed. Try studying a week ahead for a mid-term, and a month ahead for a standardized test.



Fear

I get it. If you don't pass this test, you're going to repeat this class your senior year. That's a scary notion, and that fear can be a major study distraction.

The fix: Run before you study. Fear often causes the "fight or flight" response – heart rate goes up, adrenaline courses through your veins, the urge to run becomes almost overpowering. So, put that adrenaline to good use and run for a little while before you study. Your endorphins will kick in, and you'll instantly turn your fear into something a little more positive.



Anger

Anger can be a very destructive emotion, even though we all experience it from time to time. But if you're living with constant anger – about grades, about an ex, about life in general – you're shortening your attention span in spades.

The fix: Write down what's bothering you. Looking at your anger on a piece of paper, where you've had to choose words to describe how you feel, can be really enlightening. Perhaps your anger is unfounded, or can be solved with a simple phone call. Even if it can't, just writing about what is driving you nuts can be cathartic, and you can focus on your work.



Ego

Confidence is great. Cockiness? Depends on the situation. If you are overly confident in your abilities, you could be distracting yourself from your study because you don't believe you can make a mistake.

The fix: Consider yourself human. Sure, in a knife fight, it's probably great to have a big ego. When you're studying for a test, however, you ruin your chances of learning by assuming you know everything already. Take a minute to recognize that you may have more to learn and dedicate your study session to being open to that idea.



Other Things to Do

Bills need to be paid; flat tire may need to be fixed; had a fight with girl\boy friend and are upset, you are hungry, almost any other interfering thought, obligation, responsibility, you need to address may prevent you from focusing.

The fix: There are two options for this. The first is to do whatever it is that is interfering with your concentration. Fix that flat tire, pay that bill, or call your girl\boyfriend and discuss the argument. If that is not possible, then make a To-Do list. Make a list of what needs to be done and when and how you will do it.

External Distractions

Of the two types of study distractions, external and internal, the external study distractions are by far the easiest to shake loose. Check out this list of the top five things distracting you besides your own brain, and most importantly, read the fix, so you'll know how to stay focused on studying.



Your Phone

With all the apps to choose from, games to play, people to text, music to listen to, photos to view, and conversations to be had, your phone is the #1 study distraction.

The fix: Turn it off. As a rule, you shouldn't need to talk to anyone during a study session because you'll just get off topic. Discipline yourself to wait until you've learned the material before you text someone.



Your Computer

Unless you are actively studying on it, your computer can be a huge distraction, too. By "actively" I mean that the only page you have up on your screen is the page you need.

The fix: Your computer should be turned off, too. Facebook needs to go, email needs to go, games and chat sessions have to go. You will not be able to focus on studying with all the temptations of the w



Your Friends

Unless your friends happen to be very good study partners, they can really keep you from studying, despite their best intentions.

The fix: Study alone, or with a study partner who won't distract you at all. If your friends truly care about you, then they will understand your need to learn! Real friends will give you space to study, and if they won't give it to you, you have to take it for the sake of your score.



Your Family

If you're studying in your home, and surrounded by family (moms, dads, sisters, brothers, kids, grandparents), you may have a difficult time finding enough quiet to hone in on your test material.

The fix: Find a quiet study spot. If you share a room, then hit the library or a coffee house. If your mom harasses you at every turn, then consider studying in the park or at school. Ask everyone to leave you alone so you can study. You'll be surprised how effective those words will be!



Your Physical Needs & Environment

Your body can be your own worst enemy during a study session. Sleepiness, hunger, bathroom breaks and physical discomfort can get you up out of your chair and wandering around the house, thus breaking your concentration. Any noise, temperature discomfort, time you are attempting to do school work, uncomfortable clothing, any thing that effects your comfort may divert your attention.

The fix: Anticipate your physical needs before you start studying. Use the bathroom. Snag some brain food and a beverage. Choose a time to study when you are the least tired. Grab a sweatshirt. Stop those physical study distractions before they occur. Most importantly make a schedule for success..