

# Attention



## EDUCATION

Attention is a cognitive process that involves being alert and focusing on information in the environment or on our thoughts. Paying attention involves different levels of thinking effort. We switch between the different types of attention everyday:

### Focused Attention

Responding to stimuli around you.  
Example: Someone says your name and you turn around.

### Selective Attention

Maintaining concentration with distractions. These distractions may be either external (noise) or internal (worries, pain).  
Example: Checking email while having a podcast playing in the background.

### Sustained Attention

Sustaining a steady response during continuous activity.  
Example: Watching a TV show.

### Alternating Attention

Shifting focus between activities or from one thing to another.  
Example: When you stop studying to answer a phone call and then return to where you left off with studying.

### Divided Attention

Responding to or doing more than one thing at a time.  
Example: Talking with friend while you are running or driving a car.



After concussion, there may be physical factors, like pain or fatigue, that take up space in the thinking process that could otherwise be used to help stay focused on something else. Stress and worry as well as situational factors, like being in a noisy environment, can do the same thing. Using tools to minimize these factors can help you feel in control and focus better.

Reduce interruptions and distractions. Use the "Do Not Disturb" function on your phone or turn off the sound. Study in a quiet area.

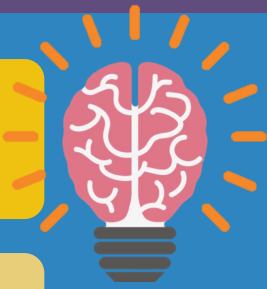
Sit in front of the classroom to help stay focused or near the aisle if you need to get up to take a break.

Focus on one thing at a time rather than multi-task. Finish a task before switching to a new one.

When you do need to switch between tasks, say to yourself what you are doing to help stay focused or leave notes to remember where you left off.

Pay attention to whether you are paying attention. Monitor and check in.

Take action to reduce the load on your brain so you have the most energy possible. Give yourself plenty of breaks throughout the day even when you are feeling good.



## STRATEGIES



Spread out studying. Short and regular study periods are more productive than lengthy single sessions.

Use the [Pomodoro Technique](#) to help stay focused and manage fatigue when studying.

Relax to help get your mind ready to focus: deep breathing, meditation, stretching, yoga, mindfulness, going for a short walk or listening to music.

Do tasks requiring more attention to detail when you have the most energy.

Use background music, white noise, or fans to limit outside distractions.

## TECHNOLOGY

Use timers on your watch, fitness tracker or phone to remind you to take breaks or to check in on whether or not you are staying on task.

Use apps to help you get relaxed and ready to focus:

- "Insight Timer" for iOS or Android
- "Calm" for iOS or Android
- "BreatheWell Wear" – Android Wear breathing app

