Minimise Study Time
Maximise Scores

VCE Exam/Study Tip 7: Boosting Concentration

Do You Get Easily Distracted?

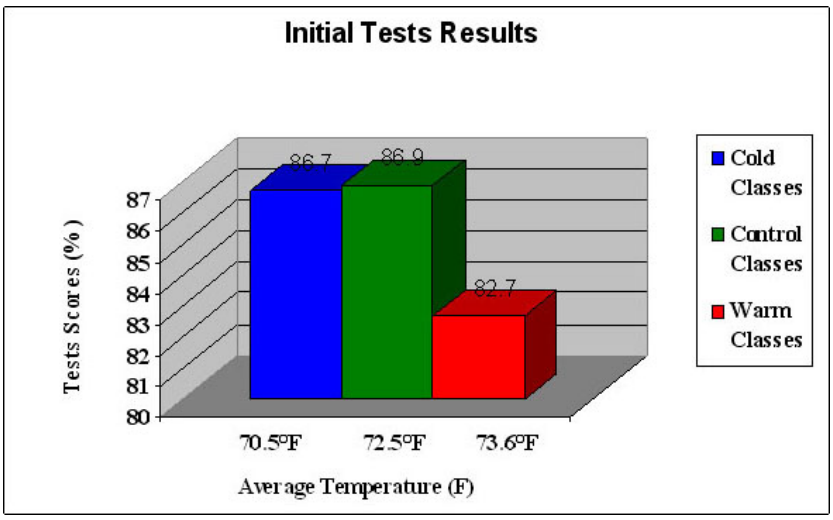
- Distractions impair the learning process and reduce how much information can be input into memory per unit time. Therefore, remove distracting stimuli and focus on the task at hand.
- Don't use any form of social media during study sessions. If social media is too strong a distraction, download one of the many social media blocking apps that are available for students.

Poor Motivation? | Can't Concentrate Effectively?

- Eat a high tyrosine breakfast. Tyrosine is a component of protein that's used to build the brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) that are involved in concentration, motivation and learning i.e. dopamine and norepinephrine.
- Even mild dehydration (<2%) which is characterised by a mildly dry mouth and dry lips can decrease concentration and test performance by 10 to 20%. Therefore, when concentration levels are waning, drink one glass of water within 5 minutes. Your alertness and energy levels will greatly improve if you're not sufficiently hydrated. At the very least, the levels of stress hormone (cortisol) will drop significantly within 10 minutes.
- Do a rhythmic activity for 1 – 5 minutes. For example, tennis, jogging, tapping, drumming etc. This will increase dopamine levels in the brain, which improves focus, motivation and task completion (very well researched and documented).
- Go outside and take a brisk walk or engage in rhythmic breathing activities. Oxygen is critical for brain function, and helps you stay sharp and alert.
- Conduct your studies by reading materials out loud. Perform calculations as if you were tutoring another student – explaining what you're doing and why.
- If you need to study in a noisy environment, purchase a cheap pair of disposable foam ear plugs (<$1) and a pair of jack hammer ear muffs from Bunnings ($21.95), and enjoy the instant silence!
- If your desk is by the window and you get distracted by what's happening outside, move your desk to another part of your room.
- Studies have shown that peppermint stimulates brain activity and enables you to concentrate better. Therefore, drink plenty of peppermint tea when studying, as well as in the exam room!

PTO

- Decrease the temperature in your study area. If necessary, layer up with clothes and open a window so you get a continual supply of fresh air. Air from cooling or heating vents is recycled throughout the house and often has a lower concentration of oxygen.



21.4°C 22.5°C 23.1°C

- Change the colour of the text in typed notes every 3 – 4 lines. Not only will this make it easier for you to keep your place, you'll absorb more information and get through each passage faster.

- Surround yourself with the colour yellow. Yellow improves focus by decreasing the production of melatonin – the hormone that makes you sleepy each evening. So invite some friends over during the school holidays and paint your study area a bright shade of yellow!

Can't Concentrate at School? | Easily Distracted?

- Turn concentration into a game. Keep your eyes on the teacher and watch them deliver the class, looking for any patterns in movements or mannerisms when they say particular words.

- Sit at the front where your teacher can see you at all times.

- Don't sit close to windows or doors.

Feel Drowsy in Class?

- Sit at the front where your teacher can see you at all times. The fear of being caught asleep will greatly reduce your chances of nodding off.

- If the lights need to be dimmed or turned off in the classroom (eg. to watch a video), stand (rather than sit) at the back or to the side of the room.

- Put a thick elastic band around your wrist and snap the band against your wrist for an instant wake up! This technique is also very effective to arrest anxiety and panic attacks ("wristband" technique).

Regards,
TSFX