

Controlling Your Environment

HCTC Student Success Tools

Set aside a fixed place only for studying.

When you are going to study, try to study in the same place each time. After a while, study becomes the appropriate behavior in that particular environment. Then, whenever you sit down in that particular place, you'll feel like going right to work.

Before you begin an assignment, write down on a sheet of paper the time you expect to finish. Doing this may put just the slightest bit of pressure on you, enough so that your study behavior will become instantly more efficient.

Strengthen your ability to concentrate by selecting a social symbol that is related to study. Select one particular article of clothing, like a scarf or hat, or a new little figurine. Just before you start to study, put on the piece of clothing or set the figurine on your desk. Use this item only for studying. If your item gets associated with anything else besides studying, like daydreaming, get a new one. This item will be a regular ritual that will help you get down to work, plus it will cue others that you are studying and shouldn't be disturbed.

If your mind wanders, stand up and don't look at your books. Don't sit at your desk staring into a book, mumbling about your poor will power. If you do, your book becomes associated with daydreaming and guilt. If you must daydream, and we all do it occasionally, stand up, but don't leave the room. Continue your daydream and then when you're ready to study, sit back down and resume studying.

Set aside a certain time to begin studying. Certain behavior is usually habitual at certain times of the day. If you can make studying – or at least some of your studying – habitual, it will be a lot easier to start. And if the behavior is started at a habitual time, you will find that it is easier to get going without daydreaming.

Set small, short-range subgoals for yourself. Divide your assignments into small units and set time goals for each one.

Keep a reminder pad. If when you're studying you happen to think about something that needs to be done, jot it down. Having written it down you can go back to studying. Worrying about forgetting the things you have to do may interfere with your studying.