Having Trouble Concentrating?

You cannot wish yourself into concentration. You need to have an environment and mindset that will allow you to sit down and focus on your task at hand. These tips promote the balance and mental stamina that will help you in your studies.¹

Approximately 1% of the world’s population will attend college. You have an important opportunity while at UC, and it’s up to you to take advantage of that during your time here. Regardless of the challenges you might face, trying to focus on the positive aspects of your life will allow you to continue to find motivation.

Pay Attention
This applies to your classes, but also to your surroundings as a whole. You won’t be able to enjoy college if you spend all four years over a book, but you won’t be able to finish college if you go out every night. Find a balance and focus on each task as you complete it. If you cannot study because you’re worried about your finances, family, or other personal issue, talk to someone, go for a walk, or write it down; then get to studying. If you cannot enjoy your time with friends because you’re worried about your grades, schedule time to prepare, turn off your phone, and focus on your target. Whatever you’re doing, pay attention.

Prepare
Do you have all your notes to study? Have you read all the necessary chapters? Gone to class? Do you have basic preparation items like a pen and food. Preparing for success includes not only studying, but having the tools and time to study. Make sure that you know what books and school supplies you need to stay organized, but also think about those everyday items that you will need to stay functioning.

Write it Down
Forget about appointments and assignments? Which subjects you need to review? Regardless of how great your memory is, it’s not as reliable as a calendar, checklist, or planner. Make it digitally or use old-fashioned pen and paper. Whatever you do, start writing down assignments, appointments, and important dates now. This will assure that nothing slips off your radar and get you in the habit of solidifying and recording your obligations.

Be Pragmatic and Realistic
Don’t plan to change your habits overnight. If you haven’t been studying and attending classes, it’s unlikely that your 6 hour cram session will earn you an A+. Instead, choose to make gradual, accomplishable changes that will lead to a more organized and successful you. Make your goals concrete. Instead of planning to “study,” mark out the exact chapters and notes you will review, for how long, and where you will do so. This kind of detail will allow you to keep track of you progress and allow you to focus on content, rather than feeling overwhelmed by the task at hand.

You Don’t Have to Succeed Alone
It’s hard to commit to unpleasant tasks, or to hold ourselves accountable. Try to build supports into your work to make it easier. Have a study-buddy. Make tutoring appointments to force yourself to attend and review material. Make a schedule that will tell you when to study, rather than depending on yourself to decide to study. Let your family know about your goals and upcoming tasks to make yourself accountable.

Enjoy Yourself!
If you hate your major, then reconsider your future career in it. If you’re always studying, ask yourself whether you could be more efficient. Your time at UC will fly by if you’re working and giving yourself time to explore new ideas and grow as a person, but if you’re constantly stressed, overwhelmed, and unhappy, then you might burnout before you achieve your degree. Instead, find a balance, find good friends, and find a subject and career that motivate and inspire you!

¹ Some tips have been adapted from W. Pauk’s “The Ability to Concentrate.” Available online at: http://www.cecs.csulb.edu/~rallison/pdf/The_Ability_to_Concentrate.pdf