

5 STRATEGIES TO STAY FOCUSED AND REDUCE DISTRACTIONS

1. Put your phone and/or smartwatch out of sight

Research has shown that even the presence of a phone is distracting. Even putting it on silent is not enough to prevent the distraction! Put your phone in your bag, across the room, or underneath a notebook: anywhere so that you cannot see it. Also turn off your notifications with a productivity app or place on do not disturb.

2. Set a time limit (e.g. “Pomodoro® Technique”)

Pomodoro technique is a strategy where you break up your work into short time limits and use a timer to alert you when time is up. In that specific system, they recommend the following:

- Choose a specific task.
 - Set a timer to 25 minutes.
 - Work on the task until the timer rings, then check it off your list.
 - Take a short break (start with 5 minutes).
- Every 4 Pomodoros, take a longer break.

3. Study in different locations

Think about how well your current study space is working for you. Is it too loud or maybe too quiet? Have you simply become bored or unproductive there? Just because a study space has worked for you before does not mean it will always work. Switch up your location and see if it helps you focus:

- For quieter areas, find an empty residence hall lounge or use one of the [Library's quiet spots](#).
- If you prefer more noise, go to a coffee shop or the lower level of the Main Library.
- It can be hard to focus in your dorm/home because you associate it with relaxing, so try studying in a separate location.

4. Focus on one assignment or task at a time

While multi-tasking seems like a good idea to increase your efficiency, no one can truly do two things at once. Instead, you switch back and forth between tasks (sometimes so quickly that you can't recognize it's happening). This switching causes us to take more time to finish tasks and not do them effectively.

5. Choose instrumental music without lyrics or white/brown noise

If you enjoy background noise, it can be tempting to put on a show or podcast while you study. However, research shows that this reduces your understanding of the material and can cause you to spend extra time studying

Additional Sources:

<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/take-charge-of-distractions/> &
<https://success.oregonstate.edu/learning/concentration>.