

# Fidget to Focus

*Maintaining focus can be one of the most challenging obstacles as a student, especially if the material is not engaging or interesting to the learner. Here are a few tips and tricks to help you manage distractions and stay focused.*

## Manage Distractions

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### Internal Distractions

Internal distractions are those that **occur in our minds**, for example, thinking about your task list, or your weekend plans when you are trying to study. Manage internal distractions by keeping a notebook nearby as a “**parking lot**.” As distractions enter your mind, write them down and consider them “parked” until you have time to address them later. Another great method to help minimize internal distractions is to maintain a regular **meditation routine**.

### External Distractions

External distractions are caused by the **things happening around you**- what you can see, hear, smell, and touch. Manage these distractions by **choosing a study location** that is most productive for you. For some students, a **quiet library** is best; for others, the white noise of a **busy coffee shop** is best. Think back to a time when you were able to focus well. What was it about the environment that helped you? How can you replicate that experience?

## Fidget & Doodle

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Studying is traditionally a sedentary activity, but our brains prefer our bodies to be in movement. Consider the following ideas to **bring movement into your study routine**:

- ✓ Review notes while **walking** (on a treadmill or with a classmate).
- ✓ Squeeze a **stress ball**, play with **silly putty**, or a **rubber band** while reading.
- ✓ Search online for “fidget devices” to find all kinds of unique fidgets.

Studies have shown that individuals who doodle or fidget during lecture retain more information. Just be sure that your fidget is not disruptive to other students.

## **Stimulate your Senses**

Similar to fidget devices above, adding **touch and taste** can help stimulate your brain and keep you focused. The brain needs glucose to function best, but not too much. Consider **sipping (not gulping) drinks with some glucose**, such as Gatorade. Sucking on **hard candies** and **chewing gum** are other methods to engage the senses. Be mindful to not consume too much sugar, which can have an adverse effect on your ability to focus.

The brain is made up of 75% water. Be sure to keep yourself hydrated while studying. **Proper hydration** will also help you with focus.

## **Use Breaks Effectively**

Studies have shown that a mentally stimulating task during study breaks can help with learning- try gaming, Sudoku, or puzzles. Taking a walk, getting a snack, and/or hydrating are also great ways to use your break time.

A good **study cycle** consists of:

- ✓ ***Goal Setting- 2 Minutes***
- ✓ ***Studying- 30-50 Minutes***
- ✓ ***Break- 10-15 Minutes***
- ✓ ***Review- 5 Minutes***

## **Focus with Metacognition**

Using metacognitive learning strategies increases your engagement with your learning materials. Some metacognitive strategies include:

- ✓ **Preview & Inquire-** Preview your materials and write down three questions you want answered during your study session.
- ✓ **Engage-** Outline, mind-map, or summarize material at regular intervals
- ✓ **Teach-** If you can teach materials, you know that you really understand.

WSU's Student Success Center offers academic support, career guidance, and counseling services at no cost to students. For assistance with any of these strategies, or for more information, visit your **Learning Specialist** by calling **509-358-7757** or make an appointment at **[wsu.mywconline.net](http://wsu.mywconline.net)**.