

Creating a Positive Study Environment

1. **Start a log.** Each time you sit down to study record factors of your study session, rate your study session, and reflect on why you gave it that rating. Using some sort of tracking table may be helpful and provide an organized representation.
 - Some factors to consider when recording; date, time of day, duration, subject matter, location, etc.
 - Rating your study session. You can use any system you like!
 - Try to provide a reasoning for your rating. This is the most important part, as you can start to recognize patterns around what factors work well and what factors or distractions are interfering with your studying. You can then start to replicate the positive factors and try to find solutions to the interfering factors/ distractions.
 - Record personal strategies that work, and new things to try as you move forward (based on your distractions).
2. **Time of day.** Everyone tends to have a period of the day they are most productive and motivated, a period when that is dwindling but they can still produce work, and a period when they are just not into it. Whatever that timing is for you (and if you are not sure, be sure to start a log), use it to your advantage. When you are most motivated and productive, plan to work on more difficult or less enjoyable content. When you are less motivated and productive but still have some study power left, plan to work on easier or more enjoyable content. Finally, know that it is healthy to have cut-offs when you don't study. This is when you can do things to maintain your work-LIFE balance.
3. **Duration.** Consider how long you can work on something and still be productive. Using the Pomodoro Method for studying and scheduling your study time are great additions to your study routine. Try this focus/ pomodoro app: [Link to Focus Booster App](#)
4. **Subject matter.** If you are unsure what your more preferred or easier subjects are, then be sure to start a log. You can consider alternating tasks within the same subject (doing a passive task like reading first, then a more active task like writing), or alternating topics (switching between reading for History and working on a Math assignment).
5. **Location.** When choosing a location to study, think about the potential distractions (people, technology, mess, noise, etc.). Sometimes we must work with what we have but take an inventory of all distractions and choose the location with the least. Sometimes we can make modifications to a less than ideal study location to make it more ideal.

- Noisy environment? Consider listening to white noise, beach waves, or instrumentals on Youtube. If you have noise cancelling headphones to use with that, even better! If you are reading material on the computer, consider activating text-to-speech features on your laptop ([Link to ALC webpage for activating accessibility features](#)).
- Poor lighting? Buy a lamp. Consider these resources for adjusting computer screen displays; [Link to f.lux computer display light software](#) , [Link to Twilight android display light app](#) or check out your device settings.
- Visual distractions? Use a cardboard box, bristol board, etc. to create your own study carrel/ tri-fold/ privacy shield. Turn your desk to face a wall or window. Close the door.
- Internet distractions? Use a website blocker:
 - [Link to Get Cold Turkey website blocker](#)
 - [Link to Freedom website blocker](#)
 - [Link to Forest focus application](#)
- Not comfortable? Too comfortable? Find a good balance between not being so comfortable that you may fall asleep but being able to spend a long period of time in that location. Put a pillow behind your back. Grab a blanket. Wear comfortable clothing.
- Cell phone distractions? Turn it off. Turn it on airplane mode. Put it across the room (or in another room) with a timer for your pomodoro study period. When the timer goes off, you can get up, go across the room and use it in this new location (don't forget to time your breaks too!).
- Food? Water? Do you have access to the things you need in your study space to work for long periods of time?
- People around? Put up a "Do not Disturb" sign. Set rules and boundaries around your space with roommates and/or family. Create a consistent schedule, so that others in your space know what to expect. Use those people to help you in your studies. Have them test you, encourage you, motivate you, or even teach the content to them!

6. Other Distractions

- Did you just remembered that thing you need to do later this week? Keep a notepad at your study space to record intrusive thoughts. That way you can rest assured it will not be forgotten and you can deal with it later.
- Feel like you have ants in your pants? Take a break to do some physical activity - maybe a walk, maybe a workout... whatever will work for you. Alternatively, use a fidget toy.
- Starting to feel overwhelmed? Try some mindfulness or grounding exercises during your break. [Link to Headspace meditation application](#)
- Just getting off task? Try shorter study periods in your Pomodoro rotation. Try setting alarms for every 30 minutes to check-in with yourself and ensure you are on task. Try to relate the material to your life. Relating

content to your own life, creates a sense of connection and meaning. Maybe it is time to switch tasks or take a longer break to refresh.

- Thinking of, or seeing chores that need to be done? Schedule that into your day, so you are sure it will get done during its own time.

Sometimes distractions call for creative solutions!

If you need more assistance with learning strategies, consider booking a strategies appointment with the ALC (alc@uleth.ca) or meeting with a Peer Mentor through the Student Success Centre ([Link to Student Success Centre Peer Mentor Webpage](#)).

References

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