

The Power of Concentration

A, B, & C Study Time

Many students have been taught to manage their time inefficiently. They save intensive study for evenings when friends, roommates or family members are present, noise levels are high, and fatigue is building. Even if you are unusually alert at that time of day, you might not be able to concentrate on one subject for an extended period of time. Looking for smaller blocks of high quality study time throughout the day will keep you fresher and improve your memory.

By identifying your time, and scheduling appropriate tasks for each one, you can increase your concentration and memory dramatically.

"A" time is for maximum concentration: You feel alert and can focus clearly. "A" time should be reserved for difficult assignments and complex information.

"B" time is for less demanding tasks, such as review and routine assignments.

"C" time - used for repetition and reinforcement - it is usually abundant. A typical day is full of odd moments that can be used for "C" tasks: waiting for a lecture to begin, sitting at a bus stop, standing in line at the bank.

Here's how it works. If you have a free hour between classes, label it "A" time and go to the library to work on high-concentration tasks, such as taking notes from your course texts or solving a problem set. Later, while you are waiting in the noisy student lounge, you can review your notes from class and write them as questions on flashcards, preview reading material or identify potential exam questions based on lecture notes - this is "B" time. In the evening, when you are feeling tired and restless, reread your course text or review your flashcards - this is "C" time.

If your only independent time comes in the evening, do "A" tasks first and find a quiet place to study. Even though you are shortening your study time slightly, you are doubling or tripling your efficiency. And a quiet walk or some reflection time is "A" time too. Although it can't be used for reading, you are free for intensive thinking about the subject you are studying.

Remember that your study area is also a factor in determining A, B, or C time. Choose quiet settings for high concentration "A" tasks. Noisier settings are suitable for "B" tasks - preview/review and process, and only "C" tasks - repetition and drill - should be done in loud areas. Sometimes you can also enrich your study time-even changing it from "C" time to "A" time - simply by eliminating noise and/or other distractions.

- Finally, examine when you have the greatest amount of energy and concentration: this is when you feel most energized, creative and enthusiastic. For some, this time is in the morning, for others it is mid-day or the evening. Discover your peak energy time of the day and use it to your advantage by scheduling to do more difficult material when you have the most energy.

Adapted from: Kornhauser, A. (1993). *How to Study*,(University of Chicago Press;
Pauk, W. (2013). *How to Study in College* (11th Ed.), Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin;