

STUDY LESS AND GET BETTER GRADES!

KEY WORDS: Class-action, Confidence and Concentration

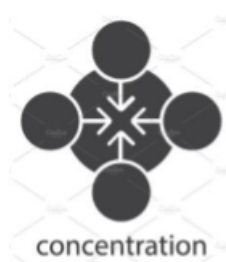
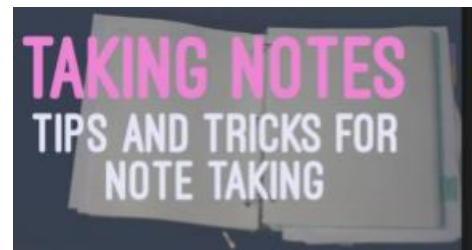
The TWO most important tools in studying and learning are **concentration** and **confidence**. We will incorporate both of these strategic tools as part of a study plan. Concentration means to focus and block out all distractions. Confidence comes through proper understanding, practice, and application and gives you the ability to face challenges.



Why was David confident to face Goliath when all his countrymen were terrified (1 Samuel 17)? It is because he understood who God is and that God would be his strength. David had complete focus (concentration) and was not distracted by the large enemy army nor the sneering from his brothers or fellow Israelites. Instead, he concentrated on doing what the Lord led him to do: pick up five smooth stones, which allowed the best projectiles. Based on practice and prior application, he aimed for a particular spot-on Goliath's forehead ... and hit it with precision.

TAKING NOTES: “Class-action”

1. Concentrating during instructional lessons and taking excellent notes (*see video for “Taking Notes in Science Class”*) is the foundation stone to successful learning. What is learning? **Learning** is the ability to synthesize, analyze, reflect, and evaluate the information, experiences and inputs that God provides or allows. Our view should be that we are life-long learners, even called to learn by the Lord Himself (Philippians 3:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:15).
2. Be on time for class with an attitude of **concentration** as soon as the class begins... a clear, rested mind (consistent sleeping habits) is essential. Often, we have distractions when we go to classes such as the home situation, the girl or boy friend, a game or performance, the test coming up, etc. **Blocking out the distractions** will not only improve your class average, but will give you a skill that few people master.



3. Do not let your mind be distracted by day dreaming or conversing with a friend. The vast majority of students could improve their learning significantly if they concentrated during class. However, so many are distracted and if so, they gain little from class time. A distracted student is one who gives up easily when the challenges come.
4. Concentrate any time the teacher is giving pertinent information. The teacher is the “textbook” on what is important in his or her class. *If the teacher does not know what is important, then you have a serious problem, but this is usually not the case.*

5. Do not “chat” with your buddies, but associate with excellent students. This is not so you can cheat off of them, but to increase your motivation. Find out why this guy or gal does well rather than make fun of him/her (in your mind). Instead of saying, “Hey, look at the nerd who got a ninety-five,” try to work out a comfortable situation with others to pick up some words, notes, or understandings that you may have missed.

6. Develop your own style of abbreviated note taking ... use symbols for words or concepts, abbreviate words, use short cuts that you can make up or fill in later ... if you know something is in a book, make a note and copy it later. Even if you cannot possibly write all the information you should have, write as much as possible for each topic, BUT DO NOT MISS INFORMATION BECAUSE YOU ARE WRITING SOMETHING FROM BEFORE. You can look this up later or ask questions, but at least you know that something in that area was covered.



Again, it is often the distracted student that usually asks the teacher to repeat him/herself over and over.



7. Always write down illustrations or examples of subject material being covered. These are clear “billboards” revealed by the teacher, showing the student what is important to know. They are usually the best keys to understand the topic at hand. Illustrations & examples are the concepts you will remember most when trying to understand a topic.

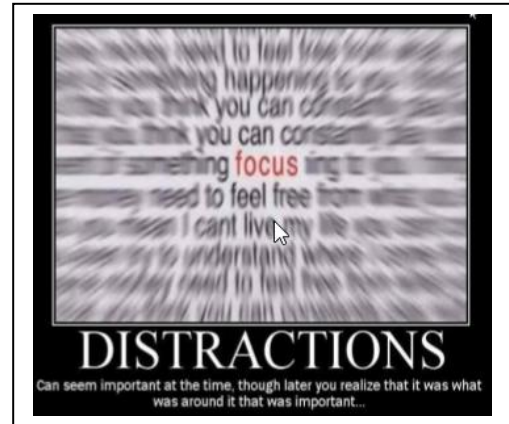
8. Compare notes with another RELIABLE student in your class. This will help fill in anything you may have missed and also clarify a concept you did not understand. Do not copy from an unreliable source. Your best friend or sibling may not pay attention or has missed the same section of notes you did. Worse yet, he/she may have the notes, but they often write down wrong information.
9. Try not to depend on others (teachers or students) for what you learn. Sometimes it is easy to relax and “let down” rather than take good notes or study because you feel you can depend on others. This does not help your confidence and you do not learn to teach yourself.
10. We need to interact with the information presented to us. Some scholars have said that it takes SEVEN (7) interactions with something before we truly grasp and remember what we studied. That is why seeing (visible), hearing, writing, doing homework, doing a lab, studying, discussing, drawing, making stories, and many other strategies help us to process information in order to understand and retain it.

STUDYING FOR A TEST:

It would surprise most students or “studiers” that they can cut their amount of study time significantly if they develop proper skills of learning. When I mastered techniques of study, I literally cut my study time in half and obtained better results! The Lord wants us to run our race

(study in this case) with purpose and with the goal of doing well (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Although God eventually grants us the success, we still need to give our whole heart to Him to accomplish what He is after. The purpose of this learning guide is to give strategies to run the “study” race more efficiently with a greater opportunity for success.

1. **Block out all distractions** from your mind when studying. By far the greatest problem in studying or taking a test is that students are so easily distracted. How do you know you are distracted? When you read or study the same thing over and over, but it just doesn't stick, you still do not understand it. We get distracted by thinking about who we like (and don't like), the ballgame, the fact of having too many blemishes, etc. Anything can distract us from study. To understand any subject well, one must



CONCENTRATE and concentrate **only on that particular subject material**. Most people can focus and concentrate on things they love, but they cannot seem to concentrate on areas not so interesting to them at the moment.

2. **Develop the proper balance between disciplining oneself to study (forcing yourself to concentrate) and knowing when not to study.** Sometimes, you just do not feel like concentrating because you have too many distractions. Generally speaking, if you try to study for ten minutes but are just too distracted or cannot concentrate, go do something else for a while! Don't waste one to two hours “studying” when you are distracted, because you won't understand or remember much and no one will be impressed when you brag or complain about studying so long. However, there is the need to **BLOCK OUT** all distractions for short periods of time so you can get something constructive done. I truly believe that the vast majority of kids, although they might complain, really want to learn and do well in school. The problem for most that do not do well is that they were not taught how to study and then they could not discipline themselves enough to succeed.
3. Don't study with the television or gaming system or social media! Don't fool yourself that you are the one person in the world who can study while distracted by such things and increase your learning (in order to get good grades). Music with words is out also because it channels you elsewhere! However, calm music without words is good for blocking out noise. I thought I disliked classical music when young until I realized what a help it was to me!

4. Do not study too long without a break (mentally or physically). For “starting” high school students, ten to fifteen minutes is a long enough study period. After fifteen minutes take a short break, and then start again. College students should strive for twenty-minute intervals of undistracted, absolute focus.

When you study too long in “one sitting”; it is like trying to add water to an already full glass. Not only does much of the new water splash out, some of the old water splashes out, and the new gets



mixed with the old. This produces confusion. We need to give our minds time to absorb the information we packed into it. Otherwise, we experience the law of diminishing returns.

It is like rain to the ground. When it rains slowly and stops, the earth can absorb all the water. However, when it pours or rains for a long time, the earth cannot absorb all the water, so flooding occurs. To students, they “study hard” but find they become confused, which then leads to frustration, which then leads to losing confidence.

5. Students should follow this minimum sequence to prepare for their tests:
 - a. **Understanding** → create and/or complete a “**Notes/Study Guide**” that takes you through the class notes. Anything you do not understand needs to be researched more. When in doubt, ask the teacher.
 - b. **Practice** → Complete **homework** with the view to practicing what you understand. This brings retention (you are reinforcing your knowledge base). Always know “why” the answer is what it is. Otherwise, research and ask questions. Students who do not understand, yet try to practice with the homework, will usually add more confusion to their minds. Practice should follow understanding.
 - c. **Application** → Perform and complete **lab experiments**. This helps lay the foundation for critical thinking (*so you are not dependent on rote memorization or spit back*) as long as you understand the process and concepts involved.
6. Students who desire excellence and maximum learning need to take another step. Create your own concise study guide. This is important because it focuses your learning to the most important concepts. Students who study “everything” without prioritizing rarely perform as well as they like. The following presents how to make an effective study guide:
 - Copy the Unit / Module / Chapter **Objectives** into a Word processing document. Objectives represent the “Big Ideas” or main concepts of the unit. All studying, homework practice, and lab application should closely relate to specific objectives.
 - Give 2-3 **MAJOR points** for each objective using the class notes (or Notes/Study Guide) in order to **understand** that particular objective.
 - Give 2-3 **MINOR points** for each major point using the class notes (or Notes/Study Guide) to better **understand** the objective. Illustrations, examples, graphics are good here. Be brief, concise, and use abbreviations. Reduce the amount of information your brain needs to store. Many students create associations, index cards, or outlines.
7. Once the concise study guide is complete, study in three phases starting no later than 2 days before the test: a) “the read through,” b) “understanding,” and c) “memorizing” (cramming). I am assuming you have already laid the foundation of excellent note taking before you actually study. However, even if you didn’t take good notes, studying in the following manner will increase your grade.

The Read Through

Read through the class notes (or Notes/Study Guide) and do all the review slides for practice. Then, use the concise study guide that you made (see #6 above). Remember to study in 10 to 15 minute blocks of “focused” time. The idea of the “read through” is to make sure that

your notes are complete and to lay a broad foundation for the content to “sit on”. If you were absent for a class, this is the time to recheck that you did not miss important work. It is helpful to use textbooks or outside reading material to enhance your notes (*to make your notes easier to understand*).

Understanding

- a) It is absolutely imperative (an essential requirement to learning) that you UNDERSTAND your notes and THE SUBJECT MATERIAL in order to be confident and, therefore, have a high level of concentration during the exam. Those who lack confidence are easily distracted and defeated on the test-taking battlefield.
- b) The “understanding” phase should be completed one or two days before the exam, so you have time to ask questions about an area you do not understand.
- c) Go through the class notes and your study guide carefully. Should you have a question, make a note or place a “?” (question mark) at the place in your notes where you did not understand. Make a list of questions that you need answered. TRY TO ANSWER YOUR OWN QUESTION FIRST using a textbook or internet. If you are truly stumped, then seek out a fellow student. Should he/she not clearly answer your question or still leave some confusion, go to the teacher. I am not implying that you avoid the instructor. Hopefully, you could ask any questions you want during class or messages. However, **to develop CONFIDENCE in your own ability to learn, you must put forth some effort.**
- d) Study for fifteen-minute blocks of good concentration (blocking out all distractions), take a break, and continue this way until you finish all the material you think is important for the test.

“Memorization or cramming”

- 1) At this stage, you are confident that you understand the class notes, you have a comprehensive study guide (that you made yourself) AND you understand as much as you feel you want to. What is really nice about this method is that you perfect it; you will begin to master the ability to determine what the instructor feels is important. Therefore, you will know those areas to emphasize: a) when you take notes, b) when you wonder if a certain subject will be on the test, and c) when you study.
- 2) The best time for this phase (memorization) is **the day before a test** so you do not forget what you memorize, but you do not cause your brain to get confused. Studying the day of the test is often not good because it may cause confusion and panic.
- 3) Before you begin the semi-painful process of cramming, divide your study guide into three sections at approximately 1/3 and 2/3 of the way through. Set these three sections as your goals to reach before you take a significant break to rest your brain.
- 4) Force yourself to memorize the important aspects of your study guide. I recommend the “read and cover” method: read a few lines, cover them up and recite them back to yourself or jot notes down on scrap paper. You decide what allows the best retention of information for you: mental recitation or writing it down again in abbreviated form. Then, read another section and recite the whole amount. At the end of the page, recite the more important items of the page. At the 1/3 or 2/3 point, recite the major points from

the beginning to end of that section. Remember not to get hung up on trivial items. **THIS REQUIRES TOTAL CONCENTRATION TO BE EFFECTIVE.** If you try to memorize when distracted, it will not work! If you cannot concentrate, don't waste your time.

5) I recommend the following “cramming” schedule for a “starting” high school student who wants to get better grades:

- Study 5-10 minutes, 2-5 minute break ➤ Study 5-10 minutes more (10-20 minutes total), 10-15 minute break → First “third” of notes completed
- Study 5-10 minutes more (15-30 minutes total), 2-5 minute break ➤ Study 5-10 minutes more (20-40 minutes total), 15-20 minute break → Second “third” of notes completed
- Study 5-10 minutes more (25-50 minutes total), 2-5 minute break ➤ Study 5-10 minutes more (30-60 minutes total) → You should be done!

Students can increase their average by ten points or more simply by studying with **FULL CONCENTRATION** for a total of 30-60 minutes.

- 6) Do not memorize when you are distracted, bored or not concentrating. This will waste your time! Go do something you enjoy for a little while to clear your head. I would avoid television, gaming, and social media, however, because you may get trapped by these things. Eventually you must discipline yourself to study.
- 7) The amount of time required to study will depend on the amount of material to study and the difficulty of the course or subject material to you. The time you take to study will also depend on your ability to concentrate. The better you concentrate, the **LESS** time you need and the **MORE** you learn! College students should learn to concentrate for twenty-minute intervals before taking a break.

The key to these three phases (*read through, understanding and memorization*) is that you will concentrate hard and not waste your time if you cannot concentrate. Why read the same paragraph for the tenth time? Why try to understand a concept that appears to be a foreign language? Go do something else and come back to studying after a half-hour or so when you can concentrate.