

A flow state of mind: Staying focused within your studies

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#WellbeingWarriors

Many times, while you are participating in a task or event, you get a feeling of being 'in the zone'. This being 'in the zone' can also be referred to as *Flow*. Terms like these are often associated with sport - we can, however, achieve this within our academics too. When you succeed at creating Flow within your studies, you can improve your academic performance (helping you [achieve your goals](#)), as well as enhance your general wellbeing.

What is Flow?

A formal definition describes *Flow* as 'a mental state where the individual is completely immersed in an activity and fully engaged in the enjoyment thereof'. Creating a state of Flow within your academics will not only help you with concentration and focus, but you may also experience increased joy from your studies. Getting 'in the zone' or experiencing Flow may happen naturally / by coincidence, but you can also purposefully do certain things to achieve Flow. Below are some ideas to consider:

1 Avoid any distractions

Things like social media, series/movies, or your phone can easily distract you. When you want to achieve a state of Flow, it requires your complete attention. Try to remove all distractions (like putting away your phone), as any of these distractions will break your focus and prevent you from achieving Flow.

2 Goal clarity

Have a clear plan of what you would like to achieve. Try to focus on smaller goals, such as finishing the first chapter, instead of focusing on ALL the work that you have to study.

3 Challenge-to-skills ratio

If your goal is too big, it will lead to anxiety, and most often procrastination. If your goal is too small, it might lead to you becoming bored. Find the right balance so that the task is still challenging, but also reachable. Research indicates that increasing the difficulty or quantity of a task by just 5% can lead to increased motivation to complete it, without overwhelming you. For example, if you usually study 20 pages in a certain allocated time, aim to study 21 pages in the same amount of time.

4 Start with the work you love

Don't jump to the most difficult part of the task, rather select the work that you enjoy. Choosing to do the most challenging part first might lead to you feeling overwhelmed.

5 Find your peak time

Know [when you study most effectively](#). By selecting a time that you usually find more conducive to study, you will also be able to create a state of Flow easier.

6 Enjoy yourself

To achieve maximum focus, it's important to enjoy what you are doing. If you dread what you are doing, your thoughts may distract you. This will lead to further procrastination instead of focus and concentration. This is closely linked to nr4. If you start with the work that you love, you will better be able to enjoy yourself.

7 Learn how to focus on a task for as long as possible

This may require a bit of practice. Try to focus on your academics for 5 minutes longer than usual. It might be challenging in the beginning, but the more you practice, the easier it will become to focus for longer periods. Consider rewarding yourself after you were able to increase your study time by 5 minutes. Rewards can include a cup of coffee or tea, some time on social media, or spending a few minutes in nature.

Various studies indicate a [correlation between Flow and happiness](#). If you manage to achieve Flow while studying, you may experience more positive emotions towards your studies. Furthermore, Flow gives you a sense of control. Thus, it can create a feeling that you have your studies in check, rather than feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

Studying might not always be easy and enjoyable. Still, it is within your control on how you would like to experience your academics. Keep in mind that there are resources, such as Flow, to help you make your studies more gratifying.

Quote by Pelé, Brazilian football legend: "Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

Quote by Brian Herbert: "The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice."