



## Planning for Effective Studying: Maintaining a Study Space and Minimizing Distractions

This lesson is designed to help students identify a study space and develop a study routine that minimizes distractions.

### Essential Question

How can using effective strategies help me take charge of my learning, in class and out?

### Guiding Question

How can I create an effective routine and location for studying?

### Objectives

- Students will be able to identify an appropriate study space and develop a study routine.
- Students will learn appropriate strategies to avoid distractions while studying outside of school.

### Advance preparation

- Prepare student handouts.
- Prepare blank lists on the board or poster paper:
  - students' preferred study distractions
  - necessary study space items

### Materials/Resources

- Lesson slideshow

### Student Materials

- Paper for Do Now and Exit Ticket
- “The Multitasking Brain?” handout
- “Study Space Inventory” activity sheet

### Vocabulary

- multitasking

## Do Now

5 min.

(Slide 1) Students write answers to the following questions:

- How much time do you spend studying or doing homework on an average day?
- What distractions do you face while studying or doing homework?

After writing their responses, students share their answers with a partner.

Allow 2-3 students to share their answers with the class.

## Introduction (Framing/Overview)

5 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication
2. Introduce the lesson objectives (slide 4) by telling students that yesterday, they learned how to manage their schedules more effectively; today they will build on this by talking about how to develop a strong focused environment in which to study and do homework. To begin, they will do a quick activity to see how well they can focus on a task (slide 5).

Show the following video (embedded in slideshow):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)

Ask students, “What does this activity tell us about focus?” (Take time to discuss as a group.)

Key points include:

- Sometimes we think we are better at multi-tasking than we really are.
- Our attention can easily be diverted if we are not careful.

Tell students that today you will build on these ideas by thinking about the environment they study in and ways to reduce distractions and make the most of their study time.

## Activity 1: Multi-Tasking - or Not?

10 min.

3. (Slide 6) Have students partner read the handout “The Multitasking Brain?” Students each then complete the “Personal ‘Multitasking’ Inventory” that follows the reading, and discuss their answers with their partners.
4. Whole class: have students share their answers and list them on the board or chart paper. Continue until you have at least ten items.

**Partner  
Reading  
Personal  
Reflection/  
Pair and  
Share  
Whole Class  
Discussion**

5. Invite students to comment on the challenges of “multitasking.” Have any of them ever tried turning off their phone or the TV to focus on a particularly challenging problem? How could they use the extra time they would have if they finished homework more quickly?

## Activity 2: Study Environment

10 min.

6. Tell students that the next step is to consider what a good study place looks like (slide 7). Give students time to discuss with a partner what they need in a space to study effectively (slide 8).
7. Then, as a class, create a list either on poster or on chart paper of ideal study space need-to-haves (slide 9). Your list may include:
  - Supplies
    - Paper
    - Pencils/ pens
    - Task specific materials (scissors, markers, crayons, calculator, etc.)
  - Desk/table/hard surface to write on
  - Adequate lighting
  - Quiet space

**Think - Pair - Share**

**Whole Class Discussion**

Note that for students, it can be difficult to create this environment. Click to reveal the question, “What can you do if it’s hard to find a good study space and necessary materials?”

Have the class brainstorm possible solutions. Some possible answers include

- Borrow supplies in advance/ reach out to teachers to borrow needed supplies
- Use headphones to listen to instrumental music or a nature sounds app to block out noise
- Find a space outside your home to study (library, friend’s home, etc.)

## Activity 3: Evaluate

5 min.

8. Tell students that now that they’ve learned what habits are effective and ineffective, it’s time to think about what their current study habits look like.

**Personal Evaluation**

Have students fill out the “Study Habits Inventory” (slide 10).

Class discussion: Invite students to share what they observed.

**Whole Class Discussion**

## Activity 4: Create a Study Plan

10 min.

9. Now give students time to create their own study plan (slide 11).

The plan should include

**Personal  
Planning**

- the time and place they intend to study
- what distractions they anticipate could occur; and
- how they plan to overcome or avoid these distractions.

As students complete this assignment, circulate in the classroom to monitor and provide feedback. Choose strong student answers to share with the class.

**Whole  
Class  
Discussion**

## Closure/ Exit Ticket

(Slide 12) Have students complete the sentence:

Tonight, I will change up my study routine by\_\_\_\_\_.

## Extensions

If you have time, consider giving students time to discuss their study plan with a partner to troubleshoot potential obstacles and share ideas.

If you wish to assign homework, have students keep a list this evening of all of the things that distract them from their study/homework time, and how much time they spend on each one (video, text message, call, snack, etc.).

## The Multi-tasking Brain?



Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many more students switched to doing homework and classwork on laptops, tablets, and even phones. One thing that is different about doing schoolwork on an electronic device is that there are so many possible distractions! Tiktok, YouTube and other videos, Instagram and social media, games... they're all at our fingertips, right there on the screen with that English or math assignment. Sounds great, right? You can multi-task and have fun while you work! You can have it all!

There's just one problem with that plan: it doesn't work. You may feel like you're getting more done, but you actually accomplish less, not more. Unfortunately, our brains aren't wired for multi-tasking.

What happens next? It depends. Maybe you don't get enough sleep, and find it hard to pay attention in class the next day. Maybe you turn in work that's sloppy or just not your best effort—or you get behind and submit assignments late. Parents and teachers become frustrated, too—no one really enjoys being a nag!

So why does your brain have such a hard time with multi-tasking? Thousands of years ago, our ancestors needed to be highly focused to survive in their dangerous, unpredictable world. Their brains were designed to help them stay alive! And we inherited the same kind of brain—one that's meant to do one thing at a time.



Of course, sometimes it does feel like you're doing two things at the same time. However, that's not what's really happening! Instead, your brain is switching back and forth between networks—as if you were putting one conversation on hold to pick up another call. And, every shift costs time and mental energy. What's the result? Less work done, and less information remembered.

Now, turn to the next page to do a personal inventory.

## Personal “Multitasking” Inventory

List all the “other” things you like to do during your time for homework and studying (for example, TV, music, answering calls or texts, TikTok, Instagram, snacking, web surfing, playing games, etc.). Discuss your list with your partner.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Based on Judy Willis, “Conquering the Multitasking Brain Drain,” Edutopia, 10.25.2016:

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/conquering-the-multitasking-brain-drain-judy-willis>

Images: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/laptop-girl-woman-people-computer-40935/>

Brain by Wes Brezell from The Noun Project <https://thenounproject.com/term/brain/189789/>

## Study Habits Inventory

Habits that can help me succeed in school	I do this a lot	I do this at times	I'd like to try this	I doubt if this would help me
1. I regularly use a planner.				
2. I do my homework every night.				
3. I do my homework at the same time every night.				
4. I do my homework in the same place every night.				
5. I turn off the television and music while I do my homework.				
6. I listen to classical/instrumental music while I study.				
7. I use headphones to block out noise around me.				
8. I break up big tasks into smaller steps.				
9. I put my phone away or turn it off while I do my homework.				
10. I know how to refocus myself when I get distracted.				
11. I set nightly goals to help me finish my work.				
12. I let my parents/guardian know about upcoming tests or assignments so they can help me stay on track.				
13. I plan ahead to make sure I finish long-term projects on time.				
14. I have contact information for someone in each of my classes to call for homework help if I miss school				
15. I review my class notes regularly so I don't have to cram for a big test				