

How to create the optimal study environment

By [James Sturdee](#)

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A general rule for success in life is to work hard and to work smart. Working smart is the difference between mindless labour and targeted hard work that is more likely to yield efficient results. Focusing on the aspects that are within our control is an extremely effective way of maximising success, and this is very applicable when studying. In this article, we will explore how to control the environment we study in, to increase our chances of success.



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Simply put, one's study environment is the conditions in which one studies. This includes the room, the background noise, the likelihood of being interrupted, time of day, do you study alone or in a group, and so on. An inappropriate environment can mean the difference between success and failure, because factors in our environment can distract us from the process of learning. Great study habits will be seriously undermined by an environment that is not conducive to studying.

Creating the zone

You need to be comfortable, but not too comfortable. Because of the repetitive nature of the studying process, one of the biggest challenges can just be staying awake. Lying on your bed, whilst comfortable, is very likely to be tempting fate in this regard. Sitting upright in a comfortable chair is generally recommended.



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Music that is too loud, has too many lyrics or is too new to you can all serve the purpose of distracting your attention from the studying process. Soft music in the background can help create a white noise of sorts, to block out other distracting sounds that you might be exposed to.

Mobile phones whilst studying are almost certainly a bad idea. When you see that flashing notification light, it is almost impossible for you to ignore it. Rather move the phone somewhere out of reach and out of sight to minimise the temptation of reading the notification.



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Study groups can sometimes be helpful as other students can help broaden our understanding of the content. But they can also be distracting. Should you choose to go this route, it is very important that everyone in the study group is on the same level, to avoid situations where one person becomes the tutor and gets distracted from the task of learning. Have a clear agenda and don't tolerate chit-chat once the study group has begun. One needs to be honest with oneself when deciding whether to be part of a study group, as there can be a time and place for them. If the idea is just to socialise instead of studying, this will be felt come exam time.

Do what works for you

As always, know what works for you and develop a study plan around this. Don't copy your friend's habits verbatim and expect they will necessarily work for you. Continue to experiment until you know what allows you to focus with the least interruptions for the longest period, then structure your studying around this knowledge. Don't be too hard on yourself and set unrealistic goals, for instance trying to study for 15 hours a day for two weeks straight. Rather focus on quality of concentration over quantity of hours spent studying.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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