

If you're like most college students struggling with ADHD, it might seem challenging to get top grades.



With ADHD, you might lose track of conversations, miss details and make mistakes, or get distracted and forget what you're working on. In short, ADHD makes focusing difficult. It's true that there are some [brainwave patterns](#) that make focusing harder. Nevertheless, you can train your brain to focus well.

Think of focus as a skill like any other—shooting baskets, trading fours on a saxophone, and so forth. You can train this skill, one step at a time.

Begin by doing things that make focus easier.

Here's how.

1. Assess Your Course Load

At the start of the semester, read the syllabus of every class right away to make sure your class load is realistic. To get top grades, you have to know what you're up against. You also have to be honest with yourself about your time and energy.

You might enroll in a class only to find that it's going to require more time and effort than you previously thought it would. If you have serious doubts about being able to dedicate yourself to the class, then consider dropping it and picking it up another semester.

You can pass any class you want to take. However, it doesn't work to get top grades when you're stretched too thin for an entire semester.

2. Find a Regular Quiet Study Place

One of the best resources you can give your mind is a regular place to concentrate. You have to be able to focus during your study time to get top grades.

This probably means leaving your dorm room and heading for the library. Think of the library as a reprieve from the distractions of college life. You can focus there, and that's the goal.

3. Make a Study Plan to Get Top Grades

Big goals are rarely achieved overnight. Having a strategy is one of the keys you need to embrace if you want to get top grades. Creating your semester-long plan is straightforward. At the beginning of each day, decide which hours you are going to study. Once you've settled on your study time, decide what exactly it is that you want to get done during that time. Your

study goals might be reading a specific chapter, completing an assignment, or writing an outline for a large paper that will be due soon.

4. Study in Short Blocks of Time

It might seem like the longer you study the more likely you are to get top grades, but that isn't exactly true. In fact, studying for long stretches has proven to be less successful than studying in bursts of 30-60 minutes. That's one of the reasons cramming doesn't work — because cramming by definition is studying for hours right before a big exam. So get the most out of your study time, make it a sprint, not a marathon. Set your timer for 30-60 minutes. Then walk around for a few minutes, grab an apple, and start again.

5. Use Time Management Tools

In [September's blog post](#), I outlined 5 rookie mistakes that many college students make. For instance, many students have a hard time saying no to things that don't really matter, and they end up feeling overwhelmed (in that article you can read about how feeling overwhelmed is really about not saying "no" enough). Small but time-wasting decisions could be squandering more time than you realize.

Also, avoid things that make focusing hard, such as alcohol or pot. These and other substances change your [brainwave patterns](#). Oddly enough, that's how you get the buzz... in a way that looks a lot like ADD.

ADHD doesn't need to be an obstacle. The path to change isn't always obvious, but with persistence you can find it. Every success is the result of a series of small steps.

Tweaking how you study — assess your course load, find a quiet place to study, make a daily plan, study in short blocks of time, and use time management tools — together will help you train your brain to focus and help you get top grades.