

# Using Study Breaks Effectively

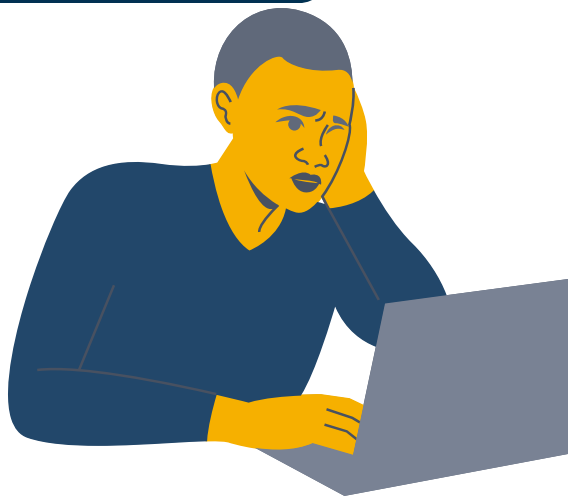
## Why should I take study breaks?



Taking intentional study breaks can increase your productivity. By giving your brain a moment to recharge, you can improve your focus, recall, motivation, and energy while also reducing stress levels.

## When should I take study breaks?

If you notice yourself becoming particularly frustrated or unable to make progress on a task, this may be a sign that you need a break. As a rule of thumb, try to take at least one five minute break for every 60 minutes of work.



## The Pomodoro Technique

If you find that you are struggling to stay focused and integrate breaks effectively, try the Pomodoro Technique. To use this technique, you simply set a timer for 25 minutes, work on a task until the timer runs out, take a five minute break, and repeat. Each block of 25 minutes work time and five minute break time, counts as one Pomodoro. After completing this cycle four times, or completing four Pomodoros, you take a longer break, usually 15-30 minutes.

If setting a timer is not useful, you can also modify this technique so that each Pomodoro refers to a task rather than an amount of time. For example, your first Pomodoro will be drafting your introductory paragraph followed by a small break. Your second Pomodoro will be drafting paragraphs two and three followed by another break, and you will continue this pattern for all four Pomodoros.

## Interleaving

If you are feeling as though you have hit a roadblock studying for a particular subject, switch it up and begin studying for something else; this is called interleaving. This practice shows similar benefits to taking a break in terms of increased focus and retention, and can be useful if you find yourself unable to take a break from your studies.



When Francesco Cirillo created the Pomodoro Technique, he used a tomato shaped timer to keep track of each 25 minute period of work - Pomodoro is Italian for tomato.



# Using Study Breaks Effectively

## What kinds of breaks are effective?



Not all breaks provide the same benefits; effective study breaks should leave you feeling refreshed and ready to resume your task. Using your break time as a chance to use social media can often be counter productive. Instead, consider trying out some of the following mood and motivation boosting tasks during your next study break.

## Nourishment

Use your break time to nourish yourself:

- Take a power nap
- Take a shower
- Make yourself a cup of coffee or tea
- Prepare and enjoy a meal or quick snack

These are all great ways to replenish your body and return to your studies feeling more focused and productive.

Check out **UNC's Bear Pantry** to choose up to 7 food and/or personal hygiene items once per week at no cost.



## Socialization



Connect with others during your break:

- Start a conversation with a roommate
- Phone a friend
- Catch up with a family member

Socializing with others can improve our emotional state and reduce feelings of stress.

## Movement and Mindfulness

Find time for movement or mindfulness exercises

- Take a short walk outside
- Stretch
- Complete a chore/tidy up your workspace
- Move your workspace to a different location
- Complete a guided meditation
- Spend a few moments practicing deep breathing

Movement re-engages our executive functioning and helps increase our engagement and productivity; similarly, mindfulness exercises can help reduce stress and allow us to return to our work feeling more attentive.



Try Insight Timer, free through the App Store and Google Play, to access 1000's of guided meditations, tailored playlists, and more.

## Creativity

Step back from your studies and create

- Daydream
- Color/paint /doodle
- Journal

Creative activities can exercise different parts of the brain and increase our supply of dopamine, leaving us in a more positive and attentive headspace



### Resources Consulted:

[The Learning Center - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#)

[Cornell Health](#)