

Attention

Attention is a thinking skill that describes a person's ability to focus and concentrate. If you are having attention problems, you may notice difficulty with staying focused for long periods of time, tuning out distractions or dividing attention between more than one task. People with attention problems sometimes also report they often don't finish tasks they start.

Strategies for staying focused on a task:

- Eliminate distractions. For example, turn off the TV in the background, shut the door or sit away from hallways and windows.
- Use self-talk to stay in the moment and focused. Ask yourself questions, "Is my mind wandering?" or "Am I focusing on what is most helpful to me right now?"
- Take notes or ask questions.
- Get plenty of sleep and avoid doing difficult tasks when tired.
- Wear earplugs or headphones to minimize auditory distractions (do this only when absolutely needed).
- Wear sunglasses or tinted lenses to reduce light sensitivity (only when absolutely needed).
- Modify the work or study environment to obtain more distraction-free conditions. For example, work in a private office or cubicle versus a large room with others, or study in a designated distraction-limited space versus a living room or kitchen or library.
- Concentrate on one task at a time. Do not try to do exercises while watching television, or do not cook while talking on the phone.
- Take a break when your attention is decreasing.

If possible, address other symptoms that can worsen attention such as:

- Pain
- Strong emotions including Anxiety, Depression & Anger
- Stress
- Lack of Sleep
- Poor nutrition or hydration
- Illness or other poor health

If these strategies aren't working, ask yourself if there is a problem that you need to SWOPS if you still cannot stay focused. You can read about SWOPS by selecting "Problem Solving" under the Mild Brain Injury tab on the left of this page.