



Office of Learning Resources

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Environment is Everything: Identifying productive places to study at Penn

Many students underestimate the influence environment can have on their productivity. Working in a location that compliments your study habits can mean the difference between productively completing an assignment and staring blankly into space. When choosing a place to study, here are some things to consider.

Background noise

Some people need complete silence in order to concentrate. Others are best able to focus if there is the pleasant hum of conversation or music playing. You might find that for some subjects you work productively when studying to music, but for others you need silence. Pay attention to how noise levels influence your studying and identify an environment that offers the appropriate levels.

Comfort Level

If you're not physically comfortable, chances are it will be more difficult for you to stay focused. Locate an environment that provides the type of seating, lighting, or air temperature that you enjoy. Do you like to eat when studying? If so, the library probably isn't an ideal location for you. Do you work best when seated at a desk with a strong light for reading? If so, then studying while lying on your bed might not be a wise choice. Decide what type of environment is best for you and look around campus to find an environment that matches.

Distractions

The key to identifying a productive study environment is locating a space that enhances your concentration. The ability to stay focused on one activity over a period of time varies between individuals. Some students are able to maintain their concentration while working in the midst of external stimuli while others require a more isolated context. Pay attention to your concentration level and make note of factors in your environment that may be distracting (e.g., television, music, email, people talking). If you find your attention wavering, remove yourself from the distractions. Take specific study breaks to

enjoy these other activities, but make sure to set limits on these breaks so that you don't lose your momentum for studying.

Gather a list of possible study spots on campus

Penn is a large campus with lots of wonderful spaces for group and individual learning. Spice up your studying by identifying two or three places that are conducive to your learning style and use them regularly. The following locations have been recommended by Penn students as great places to study:

Quiet, good lighting	Van Pelt Library (in the stacks) Biomed Library Silfan Study Center
Character, Some background noise	Fine Arts Library Penn Bookstore Houston Hall Rooftop lounges Local coffee shops
Good for study groups	Steinberg-Dietrich (open 24hrs) Study lounges in the college houses (by reservation) Group study rooms in the library (by reservation)

Ask your friends where they study. Or meet with a Learning Instructor to discuss the type of environment that best suits you.