



**Session: Paying Attention!**

**Date: 10/03/2019**

***Definition***

Reasons for poor grades, missed assignments, agitated relations between students and teachers most often stem from "not paying attention." Metaphorically, it takes less than a second to step from the safety of the curb into the path of an oncoming bus. Academically, it can take about the same amount of time to misunderstand directions, or not notice a deadline.

Who suffers the most when a student loses focus and misses an assignment, or misses a key step in solving a math problem? The principal, the teacher, or the student? Principals and teachers can recover quickly--but the student will incur the most harm when missing qualifying for entrance to college by a single SAT point.

*Let's measure your attention span* (just follow my instructions and enter all calculations in the box below) Note that this is an exercise—Not a test!

***How do you pay closer attention?***

Remove distractions. Smart phones and smart watches, laptops and tablets, all need to be stowed while you are in class and the teacher is lecturing.

Your friends can also be your biggest distraction. Avoid paying them attention during class. Ignore their antics to get noticed, and do not engage in discussions with them during class. If classmates continually distract you, ask the teacher for a seat reassignment.

Focus on the present. You have to try to keep your brain from wandering out of the classroom. No daydreaming! Keep your mind here, in the present and save thoughts about other stuff for later. This is hard to do but if you can make the change, it will really help you a lot.



Refocus your attention as necessary. Pay attention to what your mind is doing. If you catch yourself thinking about anything other than what's currently happening in the lesson then you're going to have to manually refocus your attention. This may be difficult at first; especially if the lesson is boring, but with practice you will become better able to maintain focus.

You can also stay engaged with the lecture by actively participating. Raising your hand to ask questions is one of the best ways to stay focused on the lesson.

Perhaps the most important means for staying focused in class is to annotate the lecture (taking notes). Surprisingly, this will also improve literacy. Note taking may be difficult at first, but as you continue you will develop your own "shorthand", and at the same time improve your writing skills.

Prepare before class. Sometimes you just need to be in the right mindset before you can pay attention. Before class starts, try looking over your homework, reading from your textbook, or looking at the previous day's notes. This can get your brain into "class mode", so that you can have an easier time focusing.

Some class topics may be new to you and require that you to research words and concepts you do not fully understand. Google, Wiki, Bing, and other internet tools work well to help you better understand unfamiliar words and concepts. The added benefit of using these tools can be improvement in your literacy skills.