

Taking breaks to relax, de-stress and clear your head can make your study time more efficient and effective. Spreading out your studying into multiple sessions with breaks in between not only helps your brain remember information more effectively, but it can improve your concentration and motivation while you are studying!

YOU MAY NEED A BREAK WHEN:

- You've been concentrating deeply and focusing on your work for 45-60 minutes since your last break
- You've been studying for a while and you're no longer able to focus as effectively as when you started. You notice your mind wandering more frequently, or you're unable to recall information as easily.
- You're switching from one course subject to another and need a stimulating break

MAKING BREAKS SUCCESSFUL:

- Before you start your break, **make sure you know where you are stopping.** Make a note to yourself about where you left off, or a note about where to start again, so the transition back to work is an easy one.
- **Find something relaxing or rejuvenating to do** with your break. Be aware that some activities can rapidly expand into much longer than you anticipated.
- **Know yourself and your procrastination habits.** If you won't be able to tear yourself away from Facebook, video games, television or something else after a few minutes, think about waiting until you are done with studying to engage in those activities.
- **Set a time limit (10 minutes is optimal)** for your break and stick to it. Otherwise your break can eat through time you have set aside for starting the next task. Setting an alarm or a time can be a distinct signal that it's time to get back to work.
- **Change your scenery (when possible).** Go outside, look outside, look at something new (not a book or a computer screen if you've been studying on one)
- **Integrate physical activity or stimulation (when possible).** Move around. Stretch. Splash cold water on your face.
- **When it's time to get back to work, do it.** Don't think about how much is left to do, don't let your mind wander to possible excuses for putting it off. Just psych yourself up to get started and dive in!

Information drawn from *Guide for Time Management*, University of Guelph, www.lib.uoguelph.ca/sites/default/files/breaks_and_rewards.pdf.

