Concentration

The Problem:
Many college students report problems concentrating on their studies. Most of these students blame outside distractions for their problems. Research studies manipulating noise levels and distractions have found that such disturbance may increase, decrease, or not even affect concentration. These researchers have therefore concluded that distractions don't cause concentration problems directly. It is the way the distractions are interpreted by the students that disrupts their study.

Creating a Study Environment:
♦ Find a place to study and keep it for study only.
♦ Tool-up the environment with all study needs.
♦ Control noise level and the visual environment to acceptable levels.
♦ Avoid relaxing while working; create a work atmosphere.

When to Study:
♦ Before bed-time; you'll remember better.
♦ When there are the fewest competing activities in progress.
♦ When adequate rest periods are provided.
♦ Stop studying when fatigue or lack of attention occurs.

How to Study and Concentrate:
♦ When distractions are present, become intensely involved.
♦ Keep a pad of paper handy to jot down extraneous thoughts that cross your mind while studying; get them out of your mind and on to the paper.
♦ Set study goals before you begin each period of study: number of pages, number of problems, etc.
♦ Design adequate rewards after specified goals are attained.
♦ Break-up the content of study by mixing up subjects and building in variety and interest, and removing boredom.
♦ Make the most of rest periods--do something different.
♦ Don't try to mix work and play.
♦ Start with short study periods and slowly build to longer periods, but only as fast as you can maintain concentration.
♦ If necessary, make a calendar of events to clear your mind of distractions.
♦ Realize that you won't lose friends, respect, or a "good time" just because you're studying--these will keep.
♦ Plan the length of your study period by the amount of material you have decided to cover, not by the clock. (Often, the clock is one the most serious distractions.)

Diagnostic Matters:
It is necessary that you identify which subjects are related to your concentration problems. You may notice that you really don't give yourself a chance with these subjects because of the time, order, or place you use to study. It is also valuable to assess your motives for studying in the first place. What is the reward for your effort?