

HOW TO ATTEND CLASSES JOYFULLY

The article provides a comprehensive set of suggestions. However, it is essential, to begin with just a few simple ones you think are most vital for you and do not take much time. Try these for a week or two. After you see beneficial results of these, you may like to include some more.

Experience shows that students who consistently perform better than their apparent capability across the academic spectrum have this unique capability of attending every class sincerely irrespective of whether they think the course is useful for their future aspirations, whether the teacher is good or not. They are often the more successful persons in life.

In the whole scheme of life, the content of the course may not make or break you, but your attitude towards the same may make or break you.

The most important thing is to develop robust learning strategies. Most of the knowledge in the courses you do is rarely used in the jobs. However, the learning strategies or process is useful throughout life. Attending lectures is the first step in this direction.

CHECK MOTIVATION & GOALS:

Have the following dialogue with yourself every day, and mainly when you feel like bunking classes or don't find joy in attending the same: "Coming to this Institute was a dream, and I am very happy to be here. My studies here are an investment for a brighter future. I am committed and obsessed with doing my best and getting the best out of the teachers and all the resources here. I love to attend all classes joyfully because this habit is essential for improving my capability in many ways. This capacity to joyfully attend classes that others find boring is my strength, and it gives me tremendous satisfaction. There is something to learn in every class, and it helps me tremendously in my studies. Even if the teacher lacks teaching skills, I focus on the content and do my best to understand the same. This helps me in becoming self-reliant, which is very helpful in future jobs and life as well."

When you don't feel like attending a class, ask, "Why? Will it help me move towards my goal or away from it?" Then coax your mind to attend it only for today. The idea is to take up an easy incremental challenge, overcome the inertia, and stop negative momentum from building up. This happens because even one missed class makes it more difficult to understand the next one.

If you attend a class but find focusing difficult, coax your mind to do it for just 10 minutes. If you feel comfortable, coax for 10 minutes more and so on. If you ask the mind to focus for the entire class duration, the mind may rebel, but it readily agrees to do it for a short duration. Always be with positive friends and mentors who motivate you and provide you tips to attend classes with concentration.

Accept that you don't like a particular teacher, a subject, or a specific topic. If you feel you are not good at something, accept that as well. Be peaceful with your feelings the emotions. After a while, ask yourself, "All this is true, but what do I choose? Finding small steps to make things better and moving towards the goal, or allowing things to become increasingly worse and move away from the goal?"

If you are slightly unwell (mild headache, cold, bad mood), take appropriate medicines if required, but still, try to attend classes to the extent possible. You may leave after a while, if still unwell after explaining to the teacher. This not only develops discipline but also makes you stronger by overcoming mild adversities. It doesn't matter whether you understand much of the lecture or not. Just focus on taking down notes. The most important thing is to continue the chain of good habits. The moment you miss a class, it can be the beginning of a bad habit. Missing a lecture is not an issue, but the chain reaction it creates is far more damaging. If you don't make up for it by studying independently, you will have difficulty understanding the next one. Because of this, you may even be

tempted to skip it. Every such incident hurts your mood because of the guilt, and negative thinking can cascade many other things.

Studies have shown that giving importance to what is to be done "Now" is synonymous with success, and saying "later or tomorrow" is synonymous with failure.

BEING POSITIVE & JOYFUL

In any activity, you must examine how best to use the serenity principle. At the moment, you may not have joy in attending some classes. You may attribute it to many reasons like The subject is boring. The teacher is not good. It is of no use in my career plans. As the serenity principle says, lovingly change whatever you can, and accept what you can't. You can't change the course content or the teacher. If you think you don't need this course, drop it. If you can't, accept with serenity this fact, and stop complaining and finding negatives. Now let us see how to attend classes with a positive mindset.

Use prayers and affirmations of the following type, and do it as many times a day as is practically possible. Do it with immense feelings (even if it may not be true right now).

In addition to doing the following at other times (before going to sleep and after waking up), do these compulsorily at the beginning of every class.

1. May God give me the strength and wisdom to be mindful, curious, and joyful in attending classes.
2. May the teacher, TAs, and students find joy, love, and harmony in all the course interactions.
3. I love this course; it is very interesting and useful.
4. I love the teacher; he/she is doing his best.
5. Show immense gratitude for the teacher, TAs, books, and other resource material.
6. Visualize yourself attending the lectures with joy, a smile on your face, and understanding lecture material.

Attending Online Lectures:

Covid-19 pandemic forced the entire academic system online as the only practical way of teaching all over the world. These are far from ideal for both students and teachers. Being at home and attending online lectures is even more challenging. Connectivity can be a serious issue for quite a few students. When you are hooked to a digital device for a long duration, it is not good for your eyesight. Hence, it is essential to take deliberate breaks whenever possible and close your eyes for a few minutes. Even during a lecture, closing eyes for 15-30 seconds once in a while is a good rest for the eyes. Digital devices make distractions easy to fall prey to. Despite so many issues, one needs to try and get the best out of these lectures. Availability of recorded lectures makes most of the students complacent. They think that they can watch it later when they are in a better mood. The regular lecture hours get wasted most of the time, and making up for the lost lectures is stressful. It is better to be disciplined to attend every lecture unless there is a valid reason, like a sickness. For improving concentration during such lectures, headphones are a good idea to shut out external distracting noises. Even if there are no distractions, it gives a signal to the brain to focus. Another important thing to improve concentration is taking a brief, bullet point types of lecture notes in a fair notebook. Asking questions may not be easy in this mode. However, one must note these down and seek answers from the teacher or TAs offline. Otherwise, one may lose interest in the studies or require much more effort to clear them independently.

PLAN FOR ATTENDING CLASSES

Prepare for all lectures the next day by keeping respective notebooks, pens, and any other material required for attending, like water bottles and snacks, in the bag. Decide in advance which clothes and shoes to wear and keep them ready. These small measures go a long way in saving precious time just before the first lecture.

Before the commencement of the present lecture, remind yourself to be curious and mindful. This helps tremendously in concentration and understanding. Then, quickly browse through the one-page lecture abstract of the previous lecture you have made during home studies. If possible, read a brief outline of this lecture (See Studies article). This helps a great deal in understanding the present lecture.

While attending the class, develop the front bench mentality of paying full attention to the lecture irrespective of where you sit. Keep a loving smile on your face throughout the lecture. This is the best way of learning and enjoying the class. Make it a point to ask questions if feasible. Otherwise, ask the teacher/TAs at the earliest, mutually convenient opportunity. That way, you learn to force yourself to listen, engage the teacher and learn a lot more. Asking questions is an important attribute of a wise person. It improves your confidence. Don't feel stupid or ignorant while asking questions, and don't worry about the reactions of others.

Takedown good notes (brief or elaborate depending on lecture material availability) in a fair and separate notebook for every course. The notes should be well spaced out. Even when teachers use PPT and make it available for later reading, taking down brief notes like bullet points is extremely important for improving concentration, which is otherwise very difficult when a lot of material is taught in a short time frame in such a mode of teaching. Be creative and have fun taking down notes. Study this important art from students who are better at this. When you write on paper, you write on the mind as well. Hence, it improves memory recall and also helps in avoiding distractions in a noisy environment.

Work on removing all distractions while attending the class. The smartphone is the biggest hurdle; keep it in switched-off mode. Don't allow even your best friends to disturb you. Tell them politely. Usually, they listen. If they still don't cooperate, stay away from them. Keep If-Then rules ready to deal with any form of distraction. Research has proved that even small distractions like phone notifications or vibrators cause more harm by breaking your concentration. It takes a lot of energy to keep coming back after distractions and takes a heavy toll on your quality of learning.

Accountability Partner: Ask someone like your parent, elder sibling, a positive friend in whom you have faith to monitor your class attendance habits and take you to task if required. This simple trick goes a long way in keeping you on track.

Form a group of sincere, positive classmates for attending classes together. Even travel together for the classes. Even if one is not in a mood, others persuade him. Remember the saying: A lone wolf dies, a pack survives.

HOW TO REMAIN ENERGETIC

Diet is very important if you have to perform very efficiently. Attending classes with concentration requires lots of energy. For your brain to be alert and energetic, you must always have a healthy breakfast and lunch. Try to avoid fast food as far as possible, which is not good for your body and mind. Keeping yourself adequately hydrated throughout the day is very important from the energy point of view.

Some days are very heavy, and you have a series of classes to attend. If you feel tired at the beginning of a new class, do some deep breathing. In addition, you can keep a stock of some high-energy biscuits and a water or lemonade bottle in the bag. Use these as per the need.

Afternoon lectures after a meal can be very difficult from a concentration point of view. Use lunch break smartly, and have a short 5-10 minute nap if possible. These are extremely refreshing. But never exceed 15 minutes because you may feel drowsy after that.

Students generally don't pay much attention to their appearance. However, you must look important to feel important. Your appearance talks. Use clothes to lift your spirits and build confidence. Look sharp to help you think sharp.

Daily Audit of Lecture Attendance:

Take a few minutes out to recollect how you fared in attending all the classes. Note down what went well and what didn't and the reasons for the same. Think of strategies to improve. Take help from god mentors if required.