

# **Musical Concentration**

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Classical Conversations

Challenge IV

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I have always listened to music when I am studying, however my mother would frequently argue with me about it regarding music as a distraction. She was of the belief that when I listened to music it would take away my ability to properly concentrate and that I would be far more concerned with my music than with my school work. However in my personal experience I feel as though I work faster when I am listening to music than when I am not. All of the arguing back and forth gave me an idea for my senior thesis. My idea being I should try to prove that listening to music is far from being just a distraction but in fact a tool which may help you with focus and concentration. It is for the previously stated reason that my thesis today is that listening to music provides an aid in your focus and concentration.

Now, does this mean that listening to any type of music will work as a tool to aid in your focus and concentration? No, of course not. It is true that some music does in fact have the potential to provide you with distractions such as lyrically heavy songs, music where the tempo range is too varied, or just too loud. However, if you use the right type of songs then there are many ways in which the use of music can serve as a tool to aid you when you are trying to focus or concentrate.

Before getting too far some terms should firstly be defined in order to avoid any confusion and to clarify misconceptions that may arise.

Firstly, concentration. Concentration can be defined as the direction of attention to a single object. (Merriam-Webster)

Secondly, music. Music can be defined as the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity. (Merriam-Webster)

Finally, noise. Noise can be defined as any sound that is undesired or interferes with one's hearing of something. (Merriam-Webster)

Now with the definitions brought forth the thesis shall now be stated. The thesis being presented today is that listening to music is an aid in your focus and concentration. Now, I will be primarily applying this to school work because that is the most common circumstance in which I need concentration and thus is the circumstance with which I am most familiar. However similar tasks such as college assignments, filling out paperwork, or filing your taxes, for example may be taken into consideration as well given their similar processes. I am not too familiar with these tasks however so I am not primarily focusing on them in this paper. The three reasons in which listening to music is an aid in your focus and concentration, is through the stimulating of your brain allowing for easier processing of information, the boosting of morale keeping your work moving forward, and the limiting of distractions allowing for you to study in all environments.

The first way in which listening to music is an aid in your focus and concentration is through the stimulation of your brain. Listening to music helps the brain to process and take in information more effectively, every brain type has a genre which works the best for it, and furthermore, different genres are more effective for different types of work.

Listening to music helps the brain to process and take in information more effectively. “Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory” (NU Editorial Contributors, 2025) Listening to music helps to focus parts throughout our entire brain. In doing this it allows for greater concentration. Furthermore, “Music engages various areas of the brain including those associated with memory and emotion, like the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex.” (Levine Music, 2023) For a more specific example of where concentration in the brain is positively impacted by listening to music, take for instance the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is the part of your brain which deals with things such as self control, and attention. Research shows that the use of music allows it to stay clear and on topic allowing for a lessening of distractions. By listening to music certain parts of the brain relating to memory and learning are activated, allowing for a more efficient intake of vital information. Listening to music helps to silence distracting thoughts and helps your brain to concentrate specifically on thoughts relating to the subject meant to be focused on.

Every brain type has a genre which works most effectively for it. “Understanding how you process information is key to choosing the right sound.” (NU Editorial Contributors, 2025)

For auditory learners, ambient music (elevator music, spa music, etc.) with minimal volume or tempo shift is the most effective. Kinesthetic learners require upbeat music to stay active. For neurodivergent learners there is much more variety from person to person. In this instance each individual's preference should be taken into account when finding which type is most effective. For some brain types however, such as visual learners, music may not be a viable option in which case white or brown noise may be considered as an alternative. There are many different brain types and finding the correct genre for yours in particular is very helpful when attempting to optimize concentration. I'm not entirely sure what my brain type is but in my experience the music that helps me the most is probably film/game soundtracks. Knowing how to utilize the music which works for your specific brain type can help to greatly increase your focus and concentration.

Different genres are more effective for different types of work. Different areas of study require different parts of your brain to be active so it is only logical that they would require different music genres as well. "Different study tasks call for different sound environments." (NU Editorial Contributors, 2025) To maximize reading comprehension, ambient music should be listened to. Creative writing can range from filmscore to lofi or even smooth jazz to keep ideas flowing. Moderate tempo works best for math since it helps your brain with problem solving. For creative brainstorming and design, favorite songs are great for bringing inspiration. Classical music improves accuracy and speed in concentration. Nature sounds have soothing effect, promotes concentration, and reduces stress. Binaural beats induce meditative mental state and deep concentration. "The best focus music for you will be heavily dependent on your own

preferences and work style.” (Levinmusic, 2023) By knowing the most optimal music for each subject, concentration can be made even more effective.

The second way in which listening to music is an aid for your focus and concentration is through the boosting of your morale. Listening to your favorite songs can uplift your spirits, upbeat music provides a positive effect on your mood, and listening to music helps to lower stress.

Listening to your favorite songs can uplift your spirits. It is good to take a breather every once in a while when working on hard objectives. When you do, listening to songs you really like is a good way to help you keep going. “Rewarding yourself with your favorite music can provide the motivation you need to learn new information. If you prefer music that does not work well for studying, listening to your favorite songs during study breaks could motivate you to study harder.” (Crystal Raypole, 2025) By motivating you as a reward for finishing some tough work or giving you the boost you need to before you have gotten all the way through it, listening to some of your favorite songs before, during or after your studies will work to uplift your spirit.

Upbeat music provides a positive effect on your mood. Listening to upbeat music helps give you a good mood and motivation to continue working. Personal experience: Listening to music can have a profound effect on mood. If I start listening to a ton of sad songs I am going to start to feel sadder, when listening to slower music I can start to feel tired, when I listen to upbeat

music I feel more energized and excited, which is why you should be aware of what type of music you use. Depending on what you are doing you might need to be more calm and focused or you might need to be more energized and prepared. Listening to the right type of music to shape your mood can help you to concentrate more effectively.

Listening to music helps to lower stress. Speaking from personal experience: when I am feeling stressed listening to music helps me to take moment to breathe and calm down. “Some research suggests that music can help reduce stress during an academic task and that it may help with memory and processing during tasks that require thinking.” (Crystal Raypole, 2025) “Music can boost focus and memory: By engaging both hemispheres of the brain and promoting relaxation, helping reduce stress and test anxiety.” (NU Editorial Contributors, 2025) Listening to music helps to reduce the stress impulse in your brain allowing for clearer thought. When under great duress putting on some calming music can help you to catch your breath and get back to it with a clearer mind.

The third way in which listening to music is a tool to aid in your focusing and concentration is through the limiting of distractions. Listening to music can help to block out your surroundings, as well as enabling studying in any environment, and creating your own personal audio bubble.

Listening to music can help to block out your surroundings. Listening to music on noise-cancelling headphones keeps you fully locked in on what is in front of you rather than

what is all around you, allowing you to eliminate surrounding audio based distractions entirely. “Noise cancelling headphones monitor the sound around you, preventing the unwanted noise from ever reaching your ears based on battery power, signal processing, and various noise-blocking techniques. But ultimately, miniature microphones in the earcups or earbuds listen to the outside noise frequencies and emit the exact opposite signal to effectively “cancel out” both sets of sounds when the soundwaves collide.” (Bose Headphones, 2025) With the use of sophisticated inverse audiowaves, noise-cancelling headphones emit a frequency stopping unwanted sounds from ever reaching your ears. Think of it like an energy shield protecting your ears from distraction, and blocking your mind from being distracted by the surroundings you are in.

Listening to music enables studying in any environment. In coffee shops, cafeterias, classrooms, and any other type of public property, listening to music helps to block out loud noises, other nearby people as well as many potential distractions that may be in your vicinity. This versatility can be incredibly helpful in scenarios where you might need to get some work done but maybe you can not find any quiet spaces to be alone, instead you can create one for yourself.

Listening to music creates a personal audio bubble. "The best part about headphones is when you wear them you're in your own world. The worst part about headphones you gotta take 'em off sometimes." -Miles Morales (Spiderman Into The Spiderverse, 2018) Headphones lock you into your own personal world where you can stay focused on studying rather than your

surroundings. With music it feels like it's just you and the work in front of you. No matter where you are you can have your own personal bubble to keep focus and concentration anytime and anywhere.

Listening to music is a distraction because unwanted, distracting songs may come on or ads may come on breaking concentration on the original task, While unwanted songs or ads has the potential of distraction, making a playlist beforehand or finding a playlist made by someone else can help to avoid unnecessary distractions such as skipping songs or changing stations (if you can try to avoid services with ads or download an adblocker of some kind). “Instead of relying on the radio or a random mix on Pandora or Spotify, it can help to create a playlist of the best study music for concentration. You can plan a set amount of uninterrupted music, which serves as a built-in timer for studying.” (NU Editorial Contributors, 2025) By building a playlist for studying you allow yourself to be in full control of your music. You should make sure however that you enjoy all of the songs that are in your playlist in order to avoid unnecessary distractions due to having to skip songs, or by ruminating on how much you dislike them. (Personal experience: If I put on a playlist and a song I don't like comes on it is usually less of a distraction to just skip it really quick rather than be thinking about how much I dislike a song the whole time it is playing. That being said it is better to just keep songs like that off of your study entirely because even a quick skip breaks you away from the objective you should be focusing on.)

Listening to music can be a distraction because the device on which music is being listened to may draw your attention away from your work. Things that may seem like minor distractions like checking your email really quick or responding to a text, can lead to a rabbit hole drawing you away from your work.

This may be a valid concern, I will admit that on occasion I have been distracted by other things on my phone/computer while listening to music, however this is not the fault of the music itself. Even though this isn't the fault of music, it is still a good practice to try and avoid distractions when possible. A recommendation for alternatives for less distraction, if you have the time to set it up, is using an mp3 player instead of your phone or computer. Although it will take more work and time invested and to initially download all the songs and transfer them onto the mp3 player, and extra effort to transfer new songs after the initial download, in the long run it will lead to an outcome of better focus and concentration because there will be no risk of distraction from other apps or websites. However if you do not have ample time to set up an mp3 player and are forced to use your phone or computer do not forget that you should always silence your notifications, close out of any potentially distracting or unimportant tabs, and turn on do not disturb or other focus settings, in order to make sure you stay on track.

Listening to music is a distraction because the lyrics or composition of the song may distract from the objective which is in need of focusing on. When you are trying to read or write, the lyrics of the song interfere with the thoughts inside your brain. Personal experience: sometimes if I listen to music with lyrics while I am writing a paper I will find myself

accidentally typing lyrics from the song into my paper because the singer's words and my brain words are getting jumbled together. Even listening to lyricless songs with a tempo that is too slow can be a distraction because they have the potential to mellow you out especially when you are already tired, leading to a loss of focus and concentration. The music entering your ears may interfere with your brain's ability to concentrate.

While it is true that there may be **SOME** music which can be distracting to listen to, there are also many types such as slower paced instrumental music, or lower tempo ambient music which can be a more helpful tool to aid in focus and concentration than pure silence alone. “Music with a slow tempo, lacking lyrics, and exhibiting a repetitive or ambient nature can improve concentration and promote a state of calm focus. This type of music minimizes distraction, helps maintain a consistent work pace, and can even make tasks more enjoyable.” (Levinemusic, 2023) Sure, some music has the potential to be a distraction, as I have stated at the beginning of this paper I am not claiming that all music helps you to focus and concentrate, rather that music is a tool that may be used to aid in concentration. Making sure that you use the right type of music is key to concentrating well. Furthermore, adjusting music to fit with your current mood or task is important as well. You can not just throw on any random music and expect it to work properly. There are factors you need to consider such as, high tempos, dynamic volume shifts, prominent lyricism, and bombastic sound.

Listening to music can be a distraction if you allow yourself to be sucked in by ads, unwanted songs, or other applications on the device which you are using for music. Some music

as well, can be distracting in it of itself, because of its multitude of lyrics, a tempo that is just too high, or some jumpy instrumentation all of which may interfere with the brain's ability to process complex information. Despite these factors music should still be considered as an aid to concentration because you can mitigate, or get rid of the distractions by using a service without ads, an ad blocker or an mp3 player which has no other applications that you may be distracted by. Furthermore, creating a playlist of dedicated study music allows you to be in full control of which songs are playing, removing the chance of unwanted songs in need of skipping, as well as concentration breaking high tempo music. We live in a distracting world and need to take into account all tools which may be used as an aid in focus and concentration.

In conclusion, listening to music provides aid when you are trying to concentrate.

Listening to music is an aid to concentration because it stimulates your brain, allowing it to process information easier, and providing versatility across brain types as well as throughout different tasks.

Listening to music is an aid to concentration because it boosts your morale by uplifting your spirits, improving your mood and lowering your stress levels.

Listening to music is an aid to concentration because it limits your distractions by blocking out your surroundings, allowing for focusing in any environment and creating your own immersive, personal audio bubble.

You might be wondering who should be concerned with whether or not listening to music provides a tool to aid you when you are trying to focus and concentrate? Well, the answer is

everyone! It does not matter what your age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, personal beliefs, or world views are. Everyone needs to be able to focus and concentrate during specific moments, which will likely be plentiful, throughout the entirety of their lifetimes.

We live in a world where attention is currency and companies are screaming at us to focus on them. In such a state, everyone must be aware of how they focus and be prepared to use any tool they have access to in order to lock in on what needs to get done. It does not matter who you are, we all share the need to concentrate. Whether you are an adolescent slaving away on your homework, or an adult heavily toiling over your career. Scheduling doctors appointments, paying your taxes, planning trips or events, all of these things require concentration. It is something common across every stage of life and across people in all nations of the world. Due to this fact, any tool that may be used to optimize concentration should be taken into consideration. It is for this reason we should all be thinking about how music can aid in our focus and concentration.

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