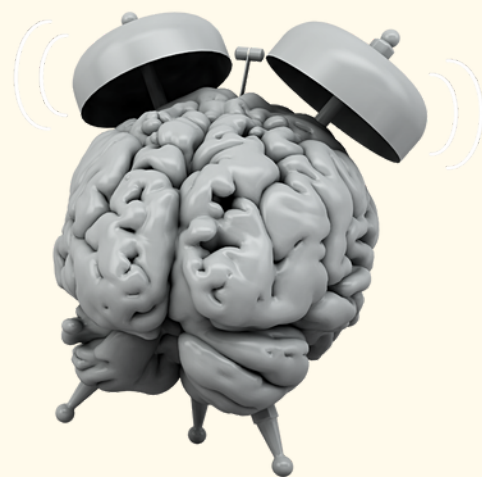




Four Types of Attentional Focus

Attention is a process, not a product. It helps you to stay sharp and allows you to focus on objects and your surroundings. There are four types of attentional focus, which are:



Sustained

Also known as undivided attention, sustained attention is the type of focus needed when trying to accomplish major tasks that require consistency and increased mental activity. This includes studying for an exam, following a complicated recipe, or driving on an unfamiliar road.



Divided

Not all activities require your full attention. A cook, for example, is used to doing several things at the same time—like slicing vegetables while frying a fish. Instead of giving one task all your focus, divided attention requires mental focus on a larger scale. Also known as multitasking, divided attention does not last as long as sustained attention.



Selective

If you are a bookworm, you must have experienced selective attention more than you realize. It's often easy to get lost in the world of imagination while reading, and you tune out other things around you. This is selective attention. You ignore what's going on in your surroundings while you are focusing on a single task.



Alternating

Individuals who are mentally flexible are able to shift their focus among different tasks at the same time. Unlike multitasking, their attention toward one task does not diminish or limit their performance in other tasks.

