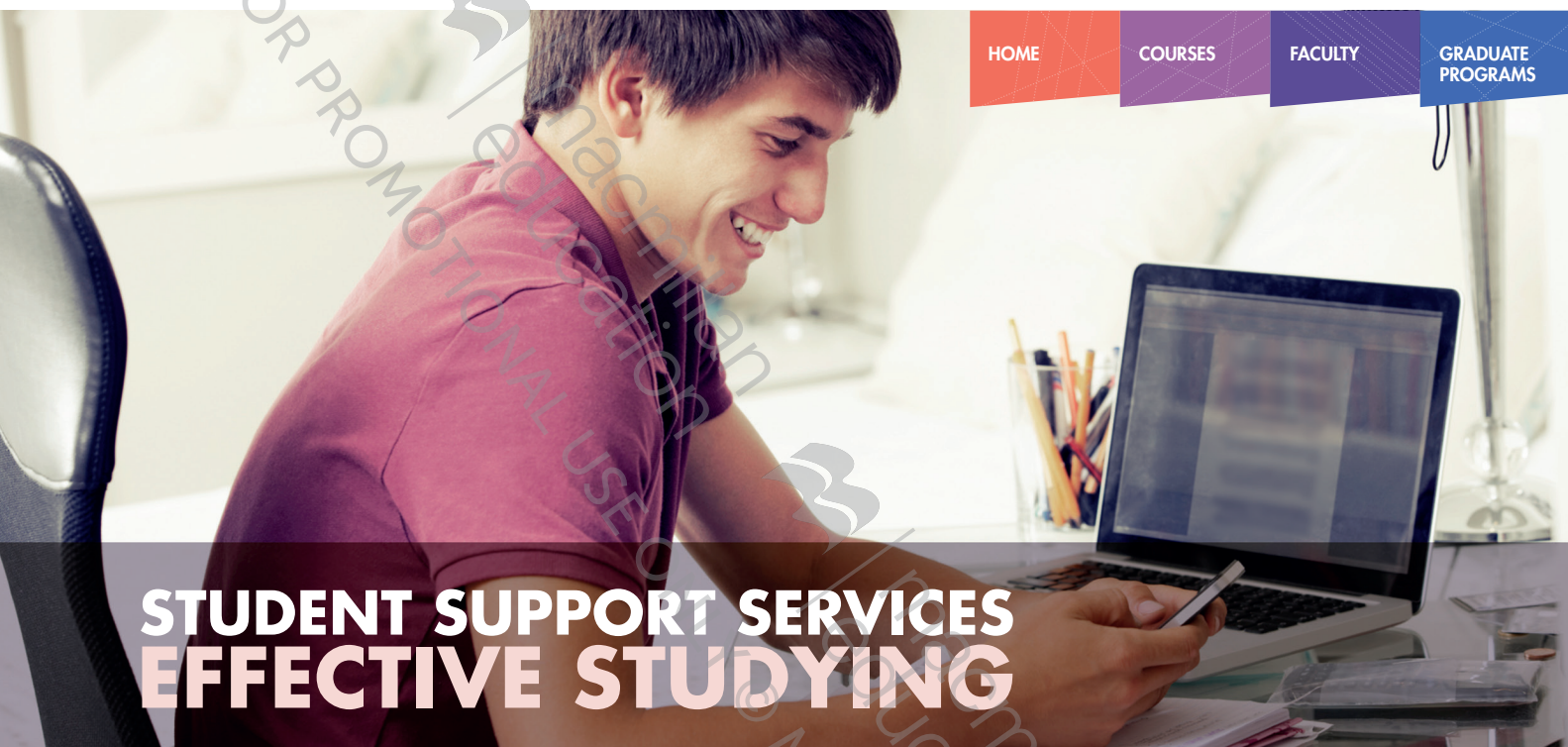


MANAGING DISTRACTIONS

- Recognise your main distractions.
- Find out ways to change habits and choose ones that work for you.
- Make a plan for managing distractions.

A Read the webpage and take the quiz about electronic distractions.



Many students are able to remain completely focused while they are studying, but most of us allow ourselves to be distracted from a task at least some of the time. Our brain seems to let us know when we need a break, so we stop what we're doing to make a phone call, talk to someone in person, eat something, have a coffee or something else. This has always been the case, but in the 21st century there are more potential distractions than ever before. We are constantly bombarded with emails, text messages, tweets, instant messages and other electronic distractions. An important part of being an effective student is to learn to manage those distractions to get the best out of the time you spend studying. Complete our quiz to get an idea of where you might have problems dealing with distractions.

Tick the statements that are true for you. Then estimate how much time you spend every day doing each activity you ticked.

When I am studying/ working ...	YES	NO	MINUTES/ HOURS PER DAY
I check my personal email.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I answer my mobile phone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I answer text/instant messages.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I chat online.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I use social networking sites.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I read messages on Twitter, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>
I surf the internet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="text"/>


Self and Society

Work and Career

Study and Learning

B  **Work in pairs. Compare your answers to the quiz. Which of you is more easily distracted? Then discuss the questions.**


- 1 What are your three main electronic distractions? How much time do you spend doing each one every day?
- 2 What effect do these distractions have on your life? Do they make you less effective when studying?

C  **Read the rest of the webpage. Discuss the suggestions the writer makes. Make a list of your ideas and then compare it with another pair.**

Most people have personal rituals associated with their study habits. For example, some people can't even think about starting to study if their desk isn't organised. Others are used to studying with music on, and they say it helps them stay relaxed while they work. Others always end their day by answering email. These are the normal types of routines that make us feel comfortable. The problem is when rituals or routines become distractions. For example, studies show that most people check their email at least once every 15 minutes. This type of constant distraction disrupts concentration and can make a task longer and more difficult. For many people, email has become more of a bad habit than a useful tool.

If you allow yourself to become distracted too easily, you will have to work to break the habit. Click [here](#) to read our top suggestions.



D  **Help each other make a plan for managing the three main distractions you identified in Exercise B. Write down the changes you plan to make for each distraction. Use suggestions from Exercise C and your own ideas.**

- A:** *I always answer text messages immediately, even if they're not urgent. I'm constantly interrupting what I'm doing to go through my messages. I feel nervous if I don't check them.*
- B:** *Well, why don't you check them once an hour? You can answer any that are important and answer the rest after work.*
- A:** *Yeah, I'm going to force myself not to check them every ten minutes!*

E  **Work in groups. Discuss the questions.**

- 1 What have you learnt about distractions and how to avoid them?
- 2 How will you manage distractions in the future?

HOW TO SAY IT

You need to get used to ...
I would advise you to ...
Don't you get tired of ...?
It might be a good idea to ...
Get someone to help you ...



RESEARCH ...

Research techniques to help you avoid distractions (e.g. the Pomodoro Technique). Choose one technique and in the next lesson, be ready to explain how this technique works. Consider using it, or the ideas behind it, the next time you study.



REFLECT ... How can the skill of managing distractions be useful to you in **Work & Career** and **Self & Society**?