

## Lesson plan: Managing distractions

Whether studying or working, our day-to-day lives are a lot more subject to interruptions than they were in the past. With email, social media and text messages to name just a few of the things that take our students' time and attention, we need to provide them with strategies to help them stay productive during work and study. This lesson plan from *Open Mind* Upper Intermediate (B2)\* level uses pairwork and groupwork to help students get to grips with managing digital distractions, which subsequently makes them better time managers. Download and circulate the accompanying [Student's Book pages](#).

**Level:** Upper Intermediate B2 / *masterMind* level 1

**Time:** approx 60 minutes or longer depending on how the activities are used

### How to use this lesson:

The lesson can be used for the whole class, who can work in pairs and small groups. Download and print out the [Student's Book pages](#) so each student has a copy.

\* Can also be used with *masterMind* 2nd edition Level 1.

**Step 1:** Recognise your main distractions. (Ex. A, Ex. B, Ex. D)

**Step 2:** Find out ways to change habits and choose ones that work for you. (Ex. C, Ex. D)

**Step 3:** Make a plan for managing distractions. (Ex. D)

### Lead-in

Read the target skill aloud and invite the students to tell you what they think *managing distractions* means.

Ask the students what a *distraction* is (something that interrupts your concentration when you are trying to do something like work or study). Ask them to give some examples of distractions (people talking to you, phone calls/texts, TV, social networking sites, etc).

Then **highlight** the three-step strategy to develop the skill of *managing distractions*.

### A

- Explain that *distracted* is the adjective form of *distraction* and that it means *not being able to concentrate on something, often because you are thinking about something else*. Give or elicit the opposite of *distracted* (focused).
- Draw attention to the photo. Ask the students what is happening in the photo. Invite volunteers to say if they've ever done the same thing as the young man in the photo.
- Ask the students to read the excerpt from a website aimed at university students. Check that they understand *bombarded with* (hit with a large amount of something, in this case, information).
- Then ask them to read the statements in the quiz and tick the ones that are true for them. Ask them to estimate the amounts of time they spend on each activity and to write the minutes or hours in the spaces.
- Have the students report back to the whole class. Find out which of the statements in the quiz are true for most students. Calculate the total amount of time spent by the class on these electronic activities.

### Extra: discussion

Point out that *focused* is the opposite of *distracted*. Ask the students to share the steps they take to stay focused when they are studying or doing something that requires concentration. Write the students' ideas on the board. When you have finished, read each idea aloud and ask the students to raise their hand if they use this method to help them focus. As a class, identify the three most popular methods to help the students stay focused.

### Extra: class survey

Have the students share the results of the quiz. Ask them to stand up and circulate to find out the following information from the other students: a) total time spent on the activities, b) the three activities that take up most of their time, c) any activities that they don't do.

Have them work in groups to calculate the average time per day spent on the activities, the activities that the students spend the most time doing and any common activities that no or few students do. Ask them to write a brief report of their findings for homework to hand in during the next lesson.

### B

- Put the students in pairs and ask them to compare their lists of distractions from Ex. A on p. 76. Ask them to tell their partner how much time they spend each day on the various activities.
- Ask the students to work individually and think about their answers to the questions. Give them two or three minutes to make some notes.
- Ask them to compare and discuss their answers to the questions with their partner. Then ask some of them to share their answers with the whole class.

### C

- Have the students continue working in the same pairs. Draw attention to the photo. Ask the students if they can relate to this student and/or if they have ever been distracted in this same way.
- Tell the students that the rest of the article contains some ways to avoid being distracted. Ask them to read the next section of the article and to make a list of ideas that the website might make.
- When the pairs have made their lists, have them combine to form groups of four and share their ideas.

### POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- Be aware of how often you are distracted and by what.
- Don't take every opportunity for a distraction. Ask yourself if you really need to answer that text message instantly or have a cup of coffee right now.
- Avoid being exposed to distractions. Work away from other people. Turn off your mobile phone. Turn off your messaging app, etc.
- Don't try to force yourself to give up all distractions. Allow yourself to take breaks, but schedule them and set time limits for them. For example, respond to messages for ten minutes, three times a day.

## D

- Have the students work in the same pairs as before. Explain that they each need to identify their three main distractions and help each other create an action plan for managing them.
- Refer the students to the **How to say it** box. Explain that these expressions are all useful ways of giving advice to someone. Briefly check that they know which ones are followed by the gerund (the first and the third). Encourage them to use some of these expressions when discussing their action plans.
- Give the students time to read the model conversation. Then ask them to work together on each other's action plans. Point out that they can use ideas from the text in Ex. C and/or their own ideas.
- Invite several students to share their action plans with the class.

### Extra: homework

Ask the students to carry out their action plan for managing distractions and report back on its effectiveness. Schedule a due date.

## E

- Put the students in pairs to discuss the questions. Encourage them to focus on the domain of Study and Learning.
- Combine the pairs to form groups of four and share their ideas.
- Focus the students on what they still need to work on in order to improve the skill of managing distractions.
- Elicit some suggestions from the class for how the students might continue to practise and develop this skill, for example, by setting time limits, keeping their calendar up-to-date, etc.

## Reflect

- Discuss the question with the whole class. Ask the students to say what they feel are the most useful points they learned from this lesson, and how the skill of managing distractions might be useful in the domains of **Work and Career** and **Self and Society**, either now or in the future.
- Elicit the following ideas: *accomplishing more in a shorter time, making more money, completing work earlier*, etc.

## Research

- Go through the task and check that the students are clear about what they have to do.
- Have the students conduct research on avoiding distractions and ask them to choose one technique they think will be effective. Ask them to be prepared to explain this technique to the rest of the class.
- Have them share their findings in class. Lead a class discussion about the advantages of each technique.