Rate your Concentration Potential

If you think (or know) that you are going to be bored by an assignment, you should give yourself the following "quiz" before starting, to see how long a time span you can reasonably expect to use before "turning off" and simply staring at the page. The worst thing about reading when you're not really involved in the text is, as you well know, that the time you spend on it is largely wasted. Consider this formula: the less you expect to get out of text, the more you have to put into it, and therefore the more "relief periods" you will need.

Take this quiz, rate yourself, follow the suggestions according to your rating, and be sure to give yourself the breaks when you need them -- that way it's more likely that you'll give the reading all you've got, while you've still got it.

Rate Yourself on The Following:

- **Physical condition** Take into consideration how much sleep you got the night before, whether you're getting over a cold, etc.
  
  Great (5); Good (4); So-so (3); Poor (2); Lousy (1)

- **Worries** Is there something—or things—bothering you that you make it hard to concentrate?
  
  No worries (5); Not very worried (4); A little worried (3); Worried (2); Very worried (1)

- **Distractions** Is there something—or things—that you would so much rather be doing now that it will be hard to stop thinking of it—or them?
  
  Nothing else to think of (5); Nothing much to think of (4); Something else to think of (3); Something else I can hardly stop thinking of (2); Something else very exciting to think of (1)

- **Anxieties about this course** Are you so worried about how you will do in this course that your fears get in the way of reading?

  No fears about this course (5); Almost no fears about this course (4); A little bit afraid about this course (3); Afraid of failing (2); Very afraid of failing (1)
• **Negative feelings** Feeling that, for example, this is not "your" kind of course, you don't like the subject matter, you're not good enough to do it, etc. Ask yourself if you have really negative feelings toward the instructor, the subject itself, or the textbook—strong negative feelings toward any of these will affect the way you read.

Mainly positive feelings (5); Fairly positive feelings (4); Fairly negative feelings much of the time (3); Negative feelings most of the time (2) Very negative feelings all the time (1)

**Now add up your score**

From 25-21: you could read at least an hour without breaks unless you run into unknown words or other problems

From 20-17: read about 40 minutes at a sitting; get up and take a good break before trying any more;

From 16-13: read about 1/2 hour -- then take a good break before trying more;

From 12-9: read only about 15 minutes -- reward yourself for a short time (listen to some music you like, talk to someone, get a snack, etc.) before making another 15-minute effort.

**REMEMBER** that to study this way means that when you read, you really read, so fifteen minutes will be worth quite a lot. It will be even better for you if you can tell someone else what you've just read during your break and/or if you look ahead a little in the book to see where you're going before you really get back to reading.

If your score is from 8-5, it would be really good for you to see if there is anything you can do about any one of the items. Look at the handouts on "Concentration," Stress management techniques" and "Stress management exercises."