How to Increase Study Motivation?
Test Yourself

I find it hard to get started with my studies.
I find studying a boring and monotonous task.
I cannot put all my energy in my studies.
I do not know what I want to accomplish in my studies.
I give up easily when the task becomes more difficult.
What Makes It so Hard to Get Motivated in Your Studies?

Getting motivated to learn and work hard is crucial for your academic success.

Motivation can be described as something that energizes, directs, and sustains your behaviors towards your goal.

Let’s look at the factors that often influence students’ level of motivation in the studies.
1. Lack of goal and interest
You may have noticed that your motivation varies depending on the tasks that you need to complete. You are more motivated to finish a coursework of which you have intrinsic interest (e.g. I want to learn more about the topic) or clear goal (e.g. I want to earn a good grade).

2. Task aversiveness
Many learning tasks are inherently not fun at all. Monotonous and repetitive tasks may drive you away from the studies. It is especially true when you have difficulty understanding the subject matter, or the topic requires a lot of rote memorization.
3. Rebellions and peer pressure
Some students do not like to work on study materials as those are assigned and required by professors/tutors. They take no ownership towards their study tasks and tend to blame their lack of motivation on others. On the other hand, some students are easily influenced by their peers. They are not motivated to start their work if their friends and coursemates had not started either.

4. Competitive demands from other obligations
As university students, there are many obligations other than studies, like sports teams, hall responsibilities, part-time jobs, social functions, etc. As the deadlines for learning tasks usually look more remote than other obligations (as exams and assignment dues usually fall at the end of the semester), many students find it more motivating to work on the other tasks first for immediate gratification and satisfaction, leaving the learning tasks at the lower priorities.
5. Fear of failure

Some students may find it hard to start working on difficult learning tasks, especially on subject matters that they have no confidence on. They may even adopt **self-handicapping strategies**, i.e. purposely defeating oneself or avoiding putting efforts in work so as to create excuses for their own possible future failure. These actions aim at protecting one’s self-esteem. For example, a student who did not put efforts in studies can attribute a failure in final exam by his/her lack of efforts, but not his/her abilities or intelligence.
Checkpoint 1

What factor(s) influence your level of study motivation?

All students are responsible for their own motivation. Because motivation can be influenced by a number of factors, you need strategies for getting motivated, even in courses that you don’t like.
What are the Strategies for Getting Motivated in Your Studies?

1. Set achievable goals

It is difficult to sustain our motivation if we do not find meanings in our work. Goals can provide us with directions and nurture our motivation. Indeed, long-term goals are like road maps: they can help us envision our paths and give us good targets to achieve. Short-term goals are like checkpoints: they can give us affirmations that we are making efforts and moving forward to our long-term goals.

For more details, please refer to Study Smart Series “How to set achievable goals?”
2. Reward yourself

Rewards can be motivating and keep us up with our momentum to study. Whenever you have accomplished a learning task or a target you set, give yourself a decent reward. For instance, you can buy yourself a coffee, participate in a pleasurable activity, or just give yourself a nice music break.

Besides, you can also envision how you want your future life to be. With all the pain, hard work, and efforts, what life are you going to end up in future? Visualize how it is like, and try to put it down on paper. Next time, when you complete every little learning task, remind yourself that you are already one step closer to your ideal future. These can keep you on track with your path to success.
Checkpoint 2

What can be used as a reward for yourself for getting the job done?
3. Add break and variety
While we all enjoy working on tasks that we like, we also have to live with jobs and tasks that are less satisfying. To maintain your motivation in monotonous and repetitive tasks, you may consider adding in intermittent breaks. You may also alternate between favourable tasks and unfavourable tasks. Change the order of the topics you plan to study if you find yourself getting bored.

4. Identify study partners
Working with others can be very motivating. Forming a study group can help you monitoring your progress and providing academic support to your weak subjects. You may start out with one study partner instead of working with several people. Have a plan for what you intend to do during the meeting, such as working on past papers, predicting or answering test questions.

5. Set up good schedule
You will lose your motivation easily if you cram all your work at one time and take long breaks at another time. A good schedule shall include a good balance between both work and leisure. You should take breaks in between study time to recharge yourself. For more details, please refer to Study Smart Series “How to manage your time efficiently?”
6. Reframe negative self-talks

Sometimes, our self-talks can be devastating. They can defeat our own motivation. For instance, self-handicapping behaviours are derived when we believe that we do not have the ability to achieve. Our study motivation will also decrease if we firmly believe that we are forced by others to do so. It is important to reframe negative self-talks into motivating statements. The below are some examples of how we can reframe our thoughts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Self-Talks</th>
<th>Positive Self-Talks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am no good in Mathematics. I just cannot make it.</td>
<td>I can try to improve my Mathematics by working harder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was told by my lecturer to write an essay on fairness and justice.</td>
<td>The writing exercise can help improve my critical thinking skills. This is an important skill set for success in my future career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have too many things on my to-do list. I just cannot get all the things done.</td>
<td>I can improve my tasks and tackle them one by one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Checkpoint 3**

Reframe the following negative statements into motivating statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Self-Talks</th>
<th>Positive Self-Talks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am doomed to be a loser. I cannot achieve good grades no matter how hard I try.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This assignment is way too boring. I just don’t want to touch it all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My lecturer forced me to read these articles for tomorrow’s quiz. I just hate it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give your example here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recap

What makes it so hard to get motivated in your studies?
- Lack of goal and interest
- Task aversiveness
- Rebellions and peer pressure
- Competitive demands from other obligations
- Fear of failure

What are the strategies for getting motivated in your studies?
- Set achievable goals
- Reward yourself
- Add break and variety
- Identify study partners
- Set up good schedule
- Reframe negative self-talks
Further information:

Study tips compiled by CEDARS - Counselling and Person Enrichment
http://w3.cedars.hku.hk/counselling

FAQ Videos for Successful University Life
http://wp.cedars.hku.hk/web/faqvideos/