

# 5 Simple Exercises to Promote Self-Regulation in University Students

Original Reference (in German): <https://deutsches-schulportal.de/unterricht/vier-einfache-uebungen-die-selbstregulation-foerdern/>

- English translation of the original resource -

# Self-regulation

- ...is not a skill that develops on its own—it must be nurtured. It involves **motivating oneself, persevering through setbacks, and focusing on one's own learning goals without getting distracted.**
- These skills are crucial for academic success and well-being.
- Teacher Educators need to train their student teachers to acquire self-regulation skills in order to support their professional competences.
- The following exercises can be easily incorporated into university teaching

# 1. Exercise: What do I want to accomplish today?

- **Objective:** To strengthen planning skills, goal orientation, and self-reflection (metacognitive strategies)
- **Procedure:** At the beginning of the class, University students write a specific learning goal on a small card and place it on the table (for example: “Today, I want to actively participate and would like to contribute five comments.”)
- At the end of the work period, they ask themselves the following questions:  
Did I achieve my goal?

If yes: What helped me achieve it today?

If no: What prevented me from achieving it today?

What can I improve tomorrow?

- **Duration:** 5–10 minutes
- **Materials:** Index cards

## 2. Develop Plan B strategies

- **Objective:** Build frustration tolerance; help students see detours as a good option
- **Procedure:** Opening question for everyone: “What do you do when you don’t understand a task?”

Have students brainstorm alternative strategies in small groups

(for example: “I look in my notebook/book again,” “I ask another student,” “I use the tutoring sessions”).

Display the results on a poster or power point slide

- **Duration:** 15–20 minutes
- **Materials:** Poster, Power Point (Laptop)

### 3. “Simon says” (game)

- **Objective:** To promote attention
- **Instructions:** After the leader says “Simon says,” all the students tap the table . When the leader gives the next command, everyone assumes a new position (for example, “Simon says: Up” = Everyone stands up; “Simon says down” = everyone squats; or “Simon says up” = everyone stands on their tiptoes). The order of the commands doesn’t matter. If the game leader simply says “up,” “sit,” etc., without using the words “Simon says” first, everyone must remain in their last position. So, it’s important to listen very carefully! If the game is already familiar, additional commands can be added. (For example, “Simon says: Turn” = Everyone turns around their body axis; or “Simon says: ‘All birds are flying high’” = The students swing their arms.)
- **Increased difficulty:** For experienced pre service teachers, the command and the required movement can be swapped. If the game leader calls out “Simon says: up,” everyone squats; if they call out “Simon says: down,” everyone stands on their tiptoes.
- **Duration:** 15–20 minutes
- **Materials:** none

## 4. Schedule short breaks (Pomodoro Technique)

- **Objective:** Practice time management, learn to work more effectively
- **Procedure:** Choose a task. Set a timer or hourglass. Work with focus for 15 minutes. Take a well-deserved break for 2–3 minutes. The student decides for themselves whether to move around, have a drink, do a breathing exercise, or look out the window during the break.
- **Duration:** 15–20 minutes; longer if there are multiple work-break intervals.
- **Materials:** Timer or hourglass

# 5. Learning Strategies Tandem

- **Objective:** To identify and share cognitive strategies—that is, learning techniques designed to improve information intake, processing, and retention—and to discuss time management
- **Procedure:** Form pairs. Create a schedule: 1. Allocate time for the task, 2. Allocate time for reflection. Both group members work individually on the same task. At the end, discuss the following questions: How did you approach the task? What helped you while working on it? Did you encounter any “stumbling blocks”? How did you deal with these difficulties?
- **Reflection time:** 5–10 minutes
- **Materials:** Index cards