



# **Study Skills**

**The driving force of  
MOTIVATION**

# Lead-in

Almost anyone can give an anecdotal example of a family member or friend who is smart, possibly even scores highly on tests, but never cared to engage in school and never got good grades. Why would such an intelligent child lack the drive to excel? Or what explanation is there for two siblings raised in the same household—one of whom is extremely academically driven and the other of whom doesn't seem to care about academics at all? These are complex questions with no easy answers. But fundamentally, they point to one important issue — students' **motivation** to learn.

# What is Motivation?

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Motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. It is what causes you to act, whether it is getting a glass of water to reduce thirst or reading a book to gain knowledge.

Motivation involves the biological, emotional, social, and cognitive forces that activate behavior. In everyday usage, the term "motivation" is frequently used to describe why a person does something. It is the driving force behind human actions.

What are your  
thoughts about  
this picture?



# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and his subsequent book Motivation and Personality. This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs.

Maslow was much more interested in learning about what makes people happy and the things that they do to achieve that aim.

As a humanist, Maslow believed that people have an inborn desire to be self-actualized, that is, to be all they can be. In order to achieve these ultimate goals, however, a number of more basic needs must be met such as the need for food, safety, love, and self-esteem



**Maslow's hierarchy** is most often displayed as a pyramid. The lowest levels of the pyramid are made up of the most basic needs, while the most complex needs are at the top of the pyramid.

Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are **basic physical requirements** including the need for food, water, sleep, and warmth. Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for **safety and security**.

As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly **psychological and social**. Soon, the need for **love, friendship**, and becomes important.

Further up the pyramid, the need for **personal esteem** and feelings of **accomplishment** take priority. Maslow emphasized the importance of **self-actualization**, which is a process of growing and developing as a person in order to achieve individual potential.

# Types of Motivation

Different types of motivation are frequently described as being either extrinsic or intrinsic:

- **Extrinsic motivations** are those that arise from outside of the individual and often involve rewards such as trophies, money, social recognition, or praise.
- **Intrinsic motivations** are those that arise from within the individual, such as doing a complicated crossword puzzle purely for the personal gratification of solving a problem.



## Uses:

There are many different uses for motivation. It serves as a guiding force for all human behavior, but understanding how it works and the factors that may impact it can be important in a number of ways

### Understanding motivation can:

- Help improve the efficiency of people as they work toward goals
- Help people take action
- Encourage people to engage in health-oriented behaviors
- Help people avoid unhealthy or maladaptive behaviors such as risk-taking and addiction
- Help people feel more in control of their lives
- Improve overall well-being and happiness

# Impact

Anyone who has ever had a goal probably immediately realizes that simply having the desire to accomplish something is not enough. Achieving such a goal requires the ability to persist through obstacles and endurance to keep going in spite of difficulties.

**There are three major components of motivation: activation, persistence, and intensity.**

**Activation** involves the decision to initiate a behavior, such as enrolling in a psychology class.

## The Major Components of Motivation



**Persistence** is the continued effort toward a goal even though obstacles may exist. An example of persistence would be taking more psychology courses in order to earn a degree although it requires a significant investment of time, energy, and resources.

**Intensity** can be seen in the concentration and vigor that goes into pursuing a goal.<sup>4</sup> For example, one student might coast by without much effort, while another student will study regularly, participate in discussions, and take advantage of research opportunities outside of class. The first student lacks intensity, while the second pursues their educational goals with greater intensity.

# Why Does Motivation Matter?

Motivation affects every aspect of schooling.

motivation is a crucial part of a student's experience from preschool onward. Motivation can affect how students approach school in general, how they relate to teachers, how much time and effort they devote to their studies, how much support they seek when they're struggling, how much they attempt to engage or disengage their fellow students from academics, how they perform on assessments (and therefore how the school performs), and so on. Hardly any aspect of the school environment is unaffected.

# Tips

All people experience fluctuations in their motivation and willpower. Sometimes you might feel fired up and highly driven to reach your goals, while at other times you might feel listless or unsure of what you want or how to achieve it.

Even if you're feeling low on motivation, there are steps you can take that will keep you moving forward. Some things you can do include:

- ✓ Adjust your goals to focus on things that really matter to you
- ✓ If you're tackling something that is just too big or too overwhelming, break it up into smaller steps and try setting your sights on achieving that first step toward progress
- ✓ Improve your confidence
- ✓ Remind yourself about what you achieved in the past and what where your strengths lie
- ✓ If there are things you feel insecure about, try working on making improvements in those areas so that you feel more skilled and capable.

A man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit and a light-colored tie, is shown from the chest up. He has a surprised or emphatic expression on his face, with wide eyes and an open mouth. His right hand is raised, with his index finger pointing towards his forehead. The background is dark and out of focus.

Study **Less**  
Study **Smart**

Study Motivation