

# INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION

## POSITIVELY COFFEE PROGRAMME

### GOOD THINKING

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q: Is coffee stimulating?

A: In general, the answer is yes. It depends on your actual level of mental and physiological activation. When the study is boring or not motivating, the caffeine in your coffee, which acts as a stimulant, could help give you the energy to study and to make the best of it. If you are fascinated and motivated by your study, your mental and physical state of alertness are high, then coffee will not contribute much.

#### Q: I heard that coffee speeds your reactions? What does this mean with reference to studying?

A: The caffeine in your cup of coffee helps you process the information from your study books and the lessons you follow.

#### Q: Can coffee help boost my memory?

A: Memory can be divided in Short Term Memory (STM), working memory (the part that is using active information) and Long Term Memory (LTM).

Coffee helps mainly with STM and the working memory when normal amounts of information have to be dealt with. With trying to cope with huge amounts of information, coffee does not help STM, your working memory or LTM.

#### Q: Can coffee lead to better learning?

A: Learning is the acquisition and storage of information. Coffee helps to improve alertness, attention and wakefulness and by that means, facilitates learning

#### Q: Does coffee drinking help my learning when I am not in the mood to drink coffee?

A: No, coffee optimises your mood when you feel like a cup of coffee.



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#### **Q: Will coffee lead to better focussed attention when studying?**

A: Yes. Drinking coffee helps to focus your attention to the main task, when there are many things around needing your attention. It draws attention to what you need to learn and leads to less distraction although doing different things at the same time may in itself be stimulating enough.

#### **Q: At what time of the day does coffee drinking have its greatest effect?**

A: At the time you feel most drowsy. If you are a true morning-type, coffee drinking has its beneficial effects in the evening. For evening types, the best effects from drinking coffee are in the morning

#### **Q: Is the post-lunch dip in attention a true phenomenon? If so, does coffee help?**

A: It is a true, natural phenomenon. It has nothing to do with taking lunch. It is the normal manifestation of the 24-hour cycle. At this time of the day, and about 3 o'clock in the morning, your metabolism is at its lowest level. Coffee will help to lift this level. To study at this time of the day is not advisable (especially at 3 o'clock in the morning), unless you take one or two cups of strong coffee.

#### **Q: Will coffee help me follow information presented during lectures?**

A: Yes. Information is better understood after having enjoyed your cup of coffee, in other words coffee helps to open your mind.

#### **Q: Is it sensible to drink coffee during lectures breaks?**

A: In general, yes. When you know that you are sensitive to coffee and the break is already within 1 hour after you have drunk coffee, it could be better to abstain or to take only a small cup of coffee.

#### **Q: Apparently coffee is beneficial for learning, attention and Short Term Memory. So the more coffee, the better?**

A: No. From your own experience, you know what amount of coffee drinking suites you best. Drinking more will result in over- stimulation and that may impair your learning and attention.



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**Q: Does coffee drinking increase my learning capacities?**

A: No, but it helps you use them more efficiently and be less easily distracted. In other words, it optimises the energy sources you have for learning.

**Q: Does the efficacy of coffee drinking depend on the subjects of lectures and during studying?**

A: Yes, when they are boring and monotonous, coffee may help to energize you. When the subject is interesting and motivating, coffee will not help you much.

**Q: I have heard that the effects of coffee depend on the type of person you are. Is that true?**

A: Well, that is an interesting point. There are indications that those who are impulsive, extravert or love challenges profit more from drinking coffee than those who are less impulsive and more introvert.

**Q: In my studying, I sometimes have to learn tedious lists of facts. Does coffee help?**

A: Yes. Since in general lists are not interesting enough to motivate, coffee will help you put more effort into the study work needed.

**Q: I always find it difficult when studying to distinguish the main points from the minor points. Does coffee help?**

A: Yes, coffee improves attention for relevant things and helps you to ignore irrelevant things. Coffee helps you to know what is important and what is not.

**Q: I am always very nervous before and during exams. Will coffee help to get rid of those feelings?**

A: No, such agitated state reflects a high mental arousal level. To drink coffee may take you beyond the optimal point and not allow you to work at your best. In such a mood, it is better to lessen your coffee consumption.



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**Q: I do not understand that when coffee is considered as stimulating, I often enjoy it because it relaxes me. That is quite puzzling to me.**

A: Both are true. The effect of coffee depends on several things. When you are not quite awake, as may happen after getting up, it helps to energize you. When you are already alert and active, it may over stimulate you and in some, the body responds to that state by dampening down its own metabolism. That explains why coffee may relax you.

Coffee scientists speak of paradoxical effects; in fact, it is a normal compensatory reaction of the body in situations when you are inclined to sooth your agitated state. Focus on the joy of coffee drinking. Enjoyment is the best means to relax

**Q: Is it sensible to drink coffee while doing exams?**

A: Doing exams is an energy - and attention demanding activity; coffee may help to sharpen your mind, assuming that you are a regular coffee drinker. Since, coffee is used as a mood optimiser, it may help to find the most appropriate state of mind to make a success of the exam.

If you are not a regular coffee drinker, then coffee may not be your best choice. So, in that case, stick to the drink you are accustomed to.

**Q: I don't drink coffee for the effects of caffeine. I just like it for its warmness, taste and flavour. Do these aspects play a role in the effects of 'drinking coffee'?**

A: Yes, studies in which the participating students expected to drink regular coffee, but got instead decaffeinated coffee, performed in a similar way in attention tasks. In other words, the expectancy of getting coffee, the smell and warmness of the coffee-like drink were sufficient to generate similar beneficial effects as regular coffee. Coffee drinking is more than taking caffeine.

**Q: Coffee is my favourite drink, I hardly think of its stimulating properties, when I drink it. Am I an atypical consumer?**

A: Coffee is a social pleasure! About half of all people do not think about it and see it as a normal part of everyday life. Seventeen % drink coffee for the conviviality it brings, and more than one third sees coffee as a relaxant.

Only 1 in seven people see coffee as an energizer and seven % uses coffee to cope with stress.



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**Q: If I am a regular coffee drinker, will my concentration, if not drinking coffee, diminish during an exam and therefore lead to a worse result?**

A: Probably yes. It is better to stick to your regular level of consumption.

**Q: Some people say that coffee is bad. Should I lessen my coffee consumption?**

A: Coffee is one of the most extensively researched commodities in the world. Literally thousands of studies have shown that coffee drinking in moderation is perfectly safe and indeed can even be beneficial to health. Moderation is generally accepted as being 4-5 cups of coffee a day.

If however you think you drink too much coffee, moderate your use and drink coffee at the times when you expect to enjoy the most of it.

**Q: If I feel my concentration is fading, is coffee helpful in refreshing it?**

A: Yes. Although concentration is also a question of putting effort into what you are doing. If your concentration fades, take a break with coffee and this may help you to concentrate again.



