



Does listening to music increase productivity?

There are many people who like to listen to music while they work and I am certainly one of them. I find it helps me focus more on the task at hand. Of course I sure it is also true that there are people who listen to music because it helps them NOT to focus on their job.

Whilst there may be many reasons for wishing to listen to music in the workplace, can it really improve your productivity?

We know that music can alter your mood. Films have been using musical scores for years to create the right mood for a scene. At times you hardly notice the music at all but you are very receptive to the mood being conveyed. So can we use music to put us in a “productive” mood?

Research seems to support such a claim. For example, a trial where 75 out of 256 workers at a large retail company were issued with personal stereos to wear at work for four weeks showed a 10% increase in productivity for the headphone wearers. Other similar research conducted by researchers at the University of Illinois found a 6.3% increase when compared with the no music control group.

So if we accept that music does increase productivity, does it matter what types of music we listen to? Does all music have the same effect or are certain types better in certain circumstances?

If your goal is to increase your concentration then music which has a constant, easy beat and light melodies are recommended. These are said to be good for those trying to study as they help you pace your reading to aid focus and memorising. Baroque music is reported as an excellent example, especially the works of Vivaldi, Bach and Handel.



Rock music can have a similar effect. According to a report in the journal *Neuroscience of Behavior and Physiology*, the Russian Academy of Sciences discovered that a person's ability to recognize visual images, including letters and numbers, is faster when either rock or classical music is playing in the background.

If you are aiming to be more productive through being more relaxed, then you may be interested to learn that research has shown that music with an upbeat rhythm can reduce stress hormone levels by as much as 41%.

Some of the most publicised studies into whether listening to music increases productivity have centred on what has been termed the "Mozart effect". The term got its name after a study showed that college students had performed better solving mathematical problems when listening to classical music. The effect of listening to Mozart does not appear to be limited to humans either. Apparently cows will produce more milk if Mozart is played.