



## Strategies for Overcoming Procrastination

Because so many people have problems with procrastination, many books, articles and websites are devoted to the topic. They include hundreds of suggestions for dealing with procrastination. Below, you will find many strategies and techniques that will help you overcome procrastination related to your academic work.

- **Just get started.** The best way to overcome procrastination is simply to get started — to take action. When you decide to work on your term paper or your English assignment, don't think about why you should or shouldn't do it — just start it. Do anything. Take out paper and write anything. Work for five to 10 minutes. At the end of that time, you can decide whether you want to work for another 10 minutes.
- **Set realistic goals.** If you set reasonable expectations for yourself, you're more likely to accomplish your goals and less likely to have negative feelings about your capabilities.
- **Clarify the directions.** Make sure that you know how to do the assignment before you begin. If you're unsure, check with the professor a tutor, or another classmate. It's hard to get started when you really aren't sure what it is you're expected to do.
- **Start with the easiest part of the task.** Do the easiest part of the assignment or only a small part of it. Once you start the assignment, you're likely to continue. Remember, getting started is half of the battle.
- **Avoid overscheduling.** Estimate how much time it will take you to complete your daily tasks. If you plan only what you can accomplish in the time you have available to for study, you won't have a long list of tasks to carry over to the next day.
- **Create "To Do" lists.** Putting your tasks in writing helps you see exactly what you must accomplish and strengthens your commitment to complete your work. Adding a specific time to begin each of your tasks will help you organize your study time and avoid procrastination.

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- **Set priorities.** If you complete your most important tasks first, you won't feel as though you have failed or let yourself down.
- **Break down large tasks.** Breaking down large tasks makes them appear less difficult or time-consuming. It's always easier to get yourself motivated to do a small task. Remember how much easier it was to read 10 pages of the chapter than the 50 pages that were assigned.
- **Recognize that not all the assignments are easy.** You will have to do some assignments that you don't like or enjoy. Some of them will be difficult or time-consuming. If you can accept the fact that not all your tasks will be pleasant experiences, that in itself will help you approach them more willingly.
- **Recognize that all courses are relevant.** Learning to see the relevance of your courses and assignments also can motivate you to do your work. Too many students think of college as something to do in order to get a job. A college education will help prepare you for a career, but it is also your opportunity to become an educated person (something that will serve you well in *any* career).
- **Use positive self-talk.** Tell yourself that you can complete the task, that you want to do it and that you can be successful. Don't tell yourself that it's too hard, too big or that you probably won't do it right. Making excuses for not working on the task leads to procrastination; using positive self-talk helps you get started now.
- **Identify escapist techniques.** You also can help yourself avoid procrastination by identifying your **escapist techniques** — things you do to keep from doing your work. Do you suddenly decide to clean the house, take a nap, check your email, watch television or visit a friend when you should be doing assignments? You may find that you aren't even aware that you're trying to avoid doing your work; you may not discover those procrastination patterns until you actually look for them.
- **Plan rewards.** Rewards help to overcome your tendency to procrastinate on certain tasks. Remember: Plan to do something that you really like as a reward for completing something you don't like to do.

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