

The Fight Against Procrastination

All of us have procrastinated at some point in our lives. In fact, if you ask most, many would consider themselves a procrastinator. Why do we procrastinate? Sometimes we underestimate the amount of time a task will take. Sometimes we view the task as unpleasant and we would rather do something more enjoyable. One thing is certain, putting off a task until the last minute will cause us more stress and angst than necessary. That is why it is important to learn strategies to overcome procrastination.

Definition of procrastination

Procrastination is the act of avoiding a task that needs to be accomplished despite the understanding that this delay may affect performance later. Procrastinators tend to leave tasks until the last possible minute before a deadline.

Did you know: 80 to 90 per cent of college students procrastinate!

Why do we procrastinate?

Self-confidence

Some students procrastinate because they doubt their ability to succeed. Unfortunately, those people may miss opportunities to try new things or do something that is in their best interest due to a lack of self-confidence.

Timing

Students may procrastinate if they feel the reward for delaying a task outweighs the reward for completing the task in the present moment. Future rewards tend to feel smaller and less important than present rewards.

Unpleasant tasks

In university, there may be other things students prefer to do instead of studying or reading their textbooks.

Absence of structure

University students must become independent learners by taking responsibility for their own learning. Students find they have a large amount of time outside the classroom. With the abundance of instant gratification via social media and television, students may spend their free time doing more pleasurable activities opposed to working on an unpleasant task.

Fear of failure

The fear of failure can be worse than failing in itself. Fear may result in a student procrastinating from taking a new course, using a new technique to study, or applying for a specialized program.

Anxiety, depression or stress (or other conditions)

A coping mechanism for anxiety, stress or other conditions is avoidance. It temporarily makes a person feel better about their current situation. Reducing stress or anxiety can help focus on the task at hand instead of delaying the inevitable.

Tips on How to Avoid Procrastination

Follow the Two Minute Rule

Part 1: If it takes less than two minutes, then do it now.

Part 2: When you start a new habit, it should take less than two minutes to do -no matter how big the goal.

Examples of the Two Minute Rule:

To become a better writer, write just one sentence (Two Minute Rule) and you might find you keep writing for a whole hour. Make reading a new habit by reading just the first page of a new book (Two Minute Rule) and before you know it, the first three chapters have flown by.

Begin a walking routine by just getting your running shoes on and yourself out the door (Two Minute Rule) and you will end up getting in that walk and feeling better about yourself.

Write down your goal and give yourself a deadline

Every goal can be started in two minutes or less by using the Two Minute Rule.

- A goal without a deadline can be put off indefinitely.
- Strengthen your goal intentions by getting a clear picture of the pros and cons:

Task, project, goal, activity	Costs associated with procrastination	Benefits of acting in a timely fashion

- Break down the goal into manageable tasks.
- Build in accountability by creating deadlines and consequences.
- Reward progress.

Eliminate your procrastination pit-stops

Get real with yourself. Now is the time to reflect on some of the easy things you can eliminate that get in the way of completing a task.

Identify your browser bookmarks that take up a lot of your time and shift them into a separate folder that is less accessible. Disable the automatic notification option in your emails, social media or text messages.

Hang out with people who inspire you to take action

Let others' positivity, motivation and energy inspire you to work on a task.

Set a time limit

Parkinson's Law tells us work will take however long we want it to take. If you give yourself four hours, you will finish it in four hours. If you give yourself three hours, you will finish within three hours. If you do not give yourself any time limit, you will take forever to do it.

Stop over-complicating things

Many students wait for the perfect time to work on a task. There will never be a perfect time and if you keep waiting, the task may never be completed. One reason students procrastinate is due to perfectionism. If you are a perfectionist, try to take some steps to overcome it.

Remind yourself that your motivational state does not need to match your intention to get started or complete a task

Students have many things to complete to graduate university, even if they do not want to do them. You do not need to be motivated to complete a task to work on it. Accepting this as true will help you get started.

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