

AVOIDING PROCRASTINATION

Procrastination is something everyone does, at least occasionally, but it is almost never beneficial and can lead to increased stress and anxiety.

You know you are procrastinating when you keep putting off doing a task for **no good reason**.

For many of us, it is an ongoing and serious problem but, as it is a learned behaviour, **it can be unlearned**.

To change our behaviour, we need to recognise the excuses we make which stop us from doing what we need to do.

Do you recognise your excuses?

- I'm more productive when I work under pressure.
- I don't know how to do this task so I'll wait until I know how to before I do it.
- This job is easier to do when I'm in the mood.
- I waited until the last moment before and it worked out okay, so why not this time?
- If I wait until the last minute, I won't spend so much time on it.
- If I do this work right now, I'll miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime social event.
- I've worked on this for so long that I have no interest or energy for it any longer.

We use many types of excuses to put off doing things that are difficult. However, once we start (and finish) doing those things, they often give us **great satisfaction**.



Conquering procrastination—steps to success

- Recognise that procrastination is a **self-management** issue and your behaviour can be changed.
- Learn to **acknowledge** when you are procrastinating and why.
- **Challenge** each reason you give for procrastinating.
- **Begin** with an aspect of a difficult task that you enjoy.
- **Break up** difficult or 'dry' work into sections. This will help you achieve each task more easily.
- **Plan** your time and stick to your plan but if it's not working change it so it is more effective.
- Set **realistic** deadlines that aren't too restrictive. Monitor your progress.
- **Avoid** being a perfectionist.
- **Consider** the time you have available and work out what you can realistically do in that time. Consult with a friend to see if you are being realistic.
- **Eliminate** time wasting activities e.g. excessive housework, excessive physical exercise, excessive socialising.
- Have a **balance** between studying, keeping healthy and enjoying life.
- **Reward** yourself after each completed task.

No more procrastination—a good time to start an assignment or project is as soon as you get it. Don't wait for the right time.

Remember

Many people procrastinate because they think

Motivation leads to Action.

In fact,

Action leads to Motivation leads to Action

1. **Self reflection** is a key to unlearning procrastinating behaviours. Recognise when you are tricking yourself into not reading or not beginning or not finishing an assignment or project. Become aware how you procrastinate, e.g. do you watch TV, go for a run, go on Facebook? The more aware you are of **when** and **why** you are procrastinating, the more likely you will be able to stop it and to use your study time effectively.
2. **Planning** your study time is also crucial as is having a **purpose** for each study session. When you break large tasks into smaller tasks, make a note of when you intend to complete each task. When you finish, check that you have completed the task in the time you set yourself.
3. List any problems that might stop you from keeping to your time goals, e.g. “I need to do more research”, “It won't be good enough”. Write down ways you intend to **overcome these problems** if they arise, e.g. “I'll write the first draft then decide if I need to do more research”.
4. **Remember** there is no such thing as a “perfect” essay or assignment.
5. **Monitor** your progress. If your study plan isn't realistic, change it but make sure changing it is not just another chance to procrastinate. Make a specific time to change your timetable. Change it, then go back to whatever you should be studying, writing or reading.

Reward yourself. Achieve your goals first, then visit your friends, watch TV, read a novel, etc. You can do so knowing you have earned the reward.

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