

# Faculty of Community Services

## Academic Support & Resource Centre

### Overcoming Procrastination

*Ever sat down to start an assignment, only to tell yourself you'll "just do it later"? Getting started is often the hardest part. Procrastination is normal, and it's not laziness, but it can leave you stressed and scrambling at the last minute. The good news is that with a few simple tips, you can break the cycle and get things done without panic.*

#### What is procrastination?

- Procrastination is the act of **delaying or postponing tasks** until the last minute or past their deadline.
- Whether it's pushing off a paper, delaying studying, or waiting until the last minute to complete assignments, procrastination can easily become a **frustrating and stressful cycle**.
- Procrastination is **not the same as laziness** or having poor time management; rather, it's often linked to more complex reasons.



#### Common reasons for procrastination:

- **Lack of interest:** When the work doesn't interest you, it's easier to push it aside and focus on tasks you enjoy more.
- **Lack of belief in your abilities:** Sometimes procrastination comes from doubting ourselves. If we don't feel confident in our skills, it can be harder to start or stick with a task.
- **Fear, anxiety, and feeling overwhelmed:** The more overwhelmed or anxious we feel about a task, the more likely we will avoid it. While avoidance may feel easier in the moment, it often increases stress and affects our health and well-being.
- **Perfectionism:** Wanting everything to be perfect can cause delays as well. We might hold off on starting a task because we're afraid it won't turn out the way we hoped, or because we're waiting for the "right moment" of inspiration.
- **Distraction:** Being in a noisy environment or surrounded by distractions can make it easier to put off tasks and find excuses to delay them.

#### Tips on how to overcome procrastination:

- **Awareness:** The first step is recognizing when you're putting tasks off. By paying attention to your habits, you can start to break the cycle. Procrastination tends to repeat, so reflecting on where you currently are in the cycle can help you take meaningful action.
- **Understand the reasons you're procrastinating:** Notice your thoughts, emotions, feelings, and situation when you feel like procrastinating and write them down. Once you understand those reasons, you can hold yourself accountable in a positive way.





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- **Set specific goals:** Create SMART goals to keep you motivated; ensure the goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. For example, instead of “I aim to finish all required readings before the next psychology lecture,” try “I aim to read 1 chapter daily for 5 days and complete all the required readings before my psychology class this upcoming Friday.”



- **Break the task down into smaller, more manageable chunks:** Take the smallest step possible towards your goal, especially when you feel unmotivated. For example, instead of aiming to write one paragraph a day, you'll aim for three sentences. Chances are, once you get started, you'll find it easier to keep going.
- **Identify a positive outcome of your actions:** One way to reduce the tendency of procrastination is to focus on the rewards of your actions. Focusing on what you want to achieve can increase motivation and makes it easier to get started.
- **Give yourself a hard deadline:** Schedule a hard deadline to which you're willing to commit and put it in your calendar. Treat this deadline the same as the actual deadline your professor assigned. This can help you complete your tasks earlier. 
- **Limit distractions:** Look for or create an optimal study environment with limited distractions to avoid getting sidetracked. This helps keep you going once you start working.
- **Practice positive self-talk:** Notice how you think and talk to yourself. Practice talking in ways that remind you of your goal. Instead of saying “I wish I did...” try “I will...”
- **Give yourself a reward for each task you complete:** Give yourself a break, have some snacks, or engage in another activity after completing a task. Rewarding yourself encourages the positive feedback loop, which motivates you to establish good studying habits. 
- **Get an accountability partner:** Reach out for help! Whether it's joining a study group or working with a friend, having social support makes a huge difference in overcoming procrastination.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Procrastination is quite common, so berating yourself doesn't help. Instead of self-blaming, focus on taking first steps and getting started to make incremental changes.

### References

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