

Procrastination: Putting Off Until Tomorrow What You Should Have Done Yesterday

Challenge the fear and anxiety that produce procrastination by combating these other symptoms:

1. Lack of Interest in Subject
 - a. Consider how readings might complement lectures and class discussions and vice versa
 - b. Read actively – converse mentally with the author, question his/her viewpoint, anticipate his/her conclusions, attempt to disprove his/her ideas
 - c. Learn to use an effective method of study – surveying and raising questions about the material can arouse interest in the reading
 - d. Be alert to ways in which your course relates to your life and the current scene
2. Lack of Goals for Study Session
 - a. Plan ahead exactly what you expect to accomplish when you sit down to study (how many pages you will read, how many questions or comments you will think up, how many problems you will solve, how many pages you will write, etc). Plan an enjoyable activity as a reward for meeting these goals
3. Poor Reading and Study Skills
 - a. Check out the Academic Support Center for resources and coaching
 - b. Learn an effective approach to textbook study
4. Trouble Getting Started
 - a. Have a definite place to study and be properly equipped with pencils, paper, a dictionary, etc.
 - b. Start work immediately after another activity so as to keep energy high and avoid losing time to transition activities (email, socializing, snacking, etc.)
 - c. Schedule other commitments to follow the current one – make it so that “now” is the only time during which you can work on this project
 - d. Prepare yourself for the study session/project/activity by telling yourself throughout the day that you will do it
 - e. A little brief review before beginning can help you get into the mood and boost your confidence
5. Daydreaming
 - a. Have only one activity available to you at a time: if you’re studying for a test, stay away from a computer and its distractions; if you’re doing internet research, leave your cell phone at home
 - b. Keep a note pad with you to jot down distracting or irrelevant thoughts that keep you from working – you can return to them later
6. Worry About Personal Problems
 - a. Similarly, note distracting problems and be sure to deal with them later
 - b. Check out the appropriate student service – the Wellness Center, MultiCultural Affairs, the Gender and Sexuality Center, the Career Center, your RA or SWA

7. Deadlines
 - a. Keep a calendar of assignment deadlines and outside-of-class appointments
 - b. Make a schedule with definite times for working on those deadlines and preparing for appointments
8. Isolation
 - a. Meet with a friend and work together. Find a tutor to help you stick to your goals, face concerns about work, learn better study skills

Other tips for beating procrastination:

1. Make an “un-schedule.” Fill in a week’s schedule with only the essentials – classes, work, organized activities. Then write down the minutes you do study and see how much time you have available for other activities, or how pressed you are to get things done
2. Give yourself credit for each step. If you solved 2 problem sets instead of 4, or read 30 pages instead of 50, recognize that you’ve done something and be proud of your efforts
3. Don’t overvalue your successes and failures. Grades are not a measure of self-worth. Your assignments and your success at completing them are not equated with your worthiness as a person
4. Face your anxieties. If you are feeling insecure about your ability to complete an assignment, meet with the professor to discuss expectations, with a tutor to plan an approach, or with friends to exchange ideas and boost each other’s confidence. Reviewing material you already know well will prepare you for studying and give you confidence
5. Contract. Develop a contract that suits your needs. If you know that you procrastinate for 30 minutes before studying, try to work that time down to 20 minutes by defining a reward or punishment as motivation
6. Use a symbol for studying. Choose an item like a hat that you put on when and only when you study. Try to associate studying with a specific object, scent, taste, or music
7. Relax your body before starting to study
8. Imagine that your brain is filled with the subject that you are going to study and that there is no room for anything else
9. Transition. Find a relevant transition activity that helps you get into studying. If you have a paper to write, break the task down by copying a favorite passage or poem. Warming up with familiar, enjoyable material might help you transition more easily into writing
10. Reward yourself for getting work done on schedule