

Overcoming Procrastination

Procrastination is a habit, not a fatal flaw. It takes persistence to change, but you can do it. Here's how:

Clarify Your Personal Goals

- ✓ Articulate and write down your personal goals. Post them on your door, mirror, notebook – so you will see them frequently.
- ✓ Be sure the task you think you “should” do is one that is important to you, and leads to your goal. If your actions are not in line with your intentions, perhaps you should change your intentions: “I said I’d study history now, but it’s more important to rest after my test today. I’ll plan to do it tomorrow morning.”

Manage Your Time Effectively

- ✓ If you do not know how to manage your time, learn. Consult an LSC counselor, attend a time management workshop, or work with an independent study program in the Reading/Writing/Study Skills Lab.
- ✓ Break your goal into little parts. Write out and list the steps you must take to accomplish your goal.
- ✓ Write out a plan for yourself. Make a schedule.
- ✓ Establish a regular time each day to work toward your goal. Get out of a disorganized lifestyle and make working toward your goal part of your routine.
- ✓ Organize your environment, complete with the tools you will need, so it is conducive to working. Alternatively, move yourself to an environment which is conducive to working.
- ✓ If you are not sure how to reach your goal, learn. For example, if you are not clear about an assignment, plan to consult with your professor. Build this appointment in to your schedule.
- ✓ Start early. Build procrastination time into your schedule. Call it “creative leisure.”
- ✓ Start small and easily. Build gradually.

Change Your Attitude

- ✓ Do you feel that the world is too difficult? That you are inadequate to meet its challenges? That you cannot function without a lot of approval? Are you frustrated with the limitations of others? Expect nothing less of yourself and others than perfection? Convinced that disaster hinges on your actions?

These are immobilizing, self-defeating, avoidance-producing attitudes and beliefs. Recognize them as such, and use them only to the extent that they are helpful. Do not indulge them, and do not believe them! Replace them with self-enhancing beliefs and attitudes.

- ✓ Remind yourself of the emotional and physical consequences of procrastination. Then remind yourself of the consequences of not procrastinating.
- ✓ Concentrate on little bits and pieces of your project; do not think “all or nothing.”
- ✓ For a day, pretend that you are a well-organized non-procrastinator. Imagine how you would think and behave. Then behave and think that way... even if only for a few minutes at a time.
- ✓ Value your mistakes; do not judge them. What is curious, useful, or interesting about them? What is worthwhile? Anything worth doing is worth doing badly.
- ✓ Know your escapes and avoidances: Self-indulgence? Socializing? Reading? Overdoing it? Running away? Daydreaming? Call yourself on them.
- ✓ Rage, complain, and vent: do not hold it in... or, hold it in, if that works for you!

Change Your Behavior

- ✓ Use your friends. Set up a contract with someone to get something done. Make an appointment to study with a friend who has no difficulty studying. Make an appointment to consult with someone who can help you with your task. Arrange to meet with a friend for support, someone who will listen and who will share your highs and lows.
- ✓ Make something you normally do and enjoy contingent upon doing the avoided task: “I’ll work on my term paper in the library for half an hour before going to play racquetball.”
- ✓ Keep your tasks visible in front of you: Set up reminders, signs, slogans, notes, lists.
- ✓ Use your impulsiveness. When you get going, keep going. Do something when you think of it – don’t think about it. Do instant, tiny things.
- ✓ Do something daily. Agree to start a project and stay with it for five minutes. Consider another five minutes at the end of the first.
- ✓ Establish priorities among tasks according to the degree of unpleasantness. Start with the most unpleasant task and work down until you get to the easier ones.
- ✓ If you’ve got something hard to do, rehearse it in your imagination or with someone. Work the bugs out; don’t terrify yourself.
- ✓ Be sure the rest of your life is in good shape... so your awful task is less awful within the context of a good general quality of life.

Accept Yourself

- ✓ Give yourself time to change.
- ✓ Expect and forgive backsliding.
- ✓ Give yourself credit for anything you do.