

Overcoming Procrastination

Introduction

William Knaus, a psychologist, estimated that 90% of college students procrastinate. Of these students, 25% are chronic procrastinators and they are usually the ones who end up dropping out of college.

What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is the avoidance of doing a task which needs to be accomplished. This can lead to feelings of guilt, inadequacy, depression and self-doubt among students. Procrastination has a high potential for painful consequences. It interferes with the academic and personal success of students.

Why do Students Procrastinate?

- **Poor Time Management.** Procrastination means not managing time wisely. You may be uncertain of your priorities, goals and objectives. You may also be overwhelmed with the task. As a result, you keep putting off your academic assignments for a later date, or spending a great deal of time with your friends and social activities, or worrying about your upcoming examination, class project and papers rather than completing them.
- **Difficulty Concentrating.** When you sit at your desk you find yourself daydreaming, staring into space, looking at pictures of your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc., instead of doing the task. Your environment is distracting and noisy. You keep running back and forth for equipment such as pencils, erasers, dictionary, etc. Your desk is cluttered and unorganized and sometimes you sit/lay on your bed to study or do your assignments. You probably notice that all of the examples that you have just read promote time wasting and frustration.
- **Fear and Anxiety.** You may be overwhelmed with the task and afraid of getting a failing grade. As a result, you spend a great deal of time worrying about your upcoming exams, papers and projects, rather than completing them.
- **Negative Beliefs** such as; "I cannot succeed in anything" and "I lack the necessary skills to perform the task" may allow you to stop yourself from getting work done.
- **Personal problems.** For example, financial difficulties, problems with your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.
- **Finding the Task Boring.**
- **Unrealistic Expectations and Perfectionism.** You may believe that you MUST read everything ever written on a subject before you can begin to write your paper. You may think that you haven't done the best you possibly could do, so it's not good enough to hand in.
- **Fear of Failure.** You may think that if you don't get an 'A', you are failure. Or that if you fail an exam, you, as a person, are a failure, rather than that you are a perfectly ok person who has failed an exam.

How to Overcome Procrastination

- Recognize self-defeating problems such as; fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, poor time management, indecisiveness and perfectionism.
- Identify your own goals, strengths and weaknesses, values and priorities.
- Compare your actions with the values you feel you have. Are your values consistent with your actions?
- Discipline yourself to use time wisely: Set priorities.
- Study in small blocks instead of long time periods. For example, you will accomplish more if you study/work in 60 minute blocks and take frequent 10 minute breaks in between, than if you study/work for 2-3 hours straight, with no breaks. Reward yourself after you complete a task.
- Motivate yourself to study: Dwell on success, not on failure. Try to study in small groups. Break large assignments into small tasks. Keep a reminder schedule and checklist.
- Set realistic goals.
- Modify your environment: Eliminate or minimize noise/ distraction. Ensure adequate lighting. Have necessary equipment at hand. Don't waste time going back and forth to get things. Don't get too comfortable when studying. A desk and straight-backed chair is usually best (a bed is no place to study). Be neat! Take a few minutes to straighten your desk. This can help to reduce day-dreaming.

Help! Where to find it.

Counseling Services (645-2720)

120 Richmond Quad
Ellicott Complex

[Edwards Learning Center](#) (645-2394)
217 Baldy Hall
North Campus

[Methods Of Inquiry](#) (a 3 credit class)
GSE 155