

Establish an **action environment**. Have the necessary tools and materials at hand and organized. Associate with people who complete their assignments on time. Have privacy.

Use **visible reminders** of your intentions and objectives.

Manage your time (set priorities and make a schedule). Set aside time for doing things that make you feel good and stay healthy. This way, you will feel less guilty when you play and less tempted to stray when you are studying.

Every morning, **ask yourself what your goals are for the day** (which activities and tasks have priority and how you must go about achieving those goals). Be precise in establishing your schedule; decide exactly at what moment in the day you will accomplish each activity.

Use the reinforcement principle. Reward yourself for doing the task you set out to do. Do not reward yourself for tasks that remain uncompleted.

Now that you've sat yourself down at your desk . . .

Stop thinking in vague and general terms and focus your attention on specific tasks (e.g. How will I go about accomplishing this assignment for my anthropology class? How will I start?).

Do not do your favourite activities first. Use them as a reward for getting the more difficult assignments done.

Divide overwhelming tasks into manageable parts. This is especially true for long reading assignments and papers.

Use the five minute plan for priorities which cannot be broken down into smaller tasks (i.e. filing). Promise yourself that you will only work on the task for five minutes and, at the end of that time, you are free to turn to something else. However, you may decide to work on that task for another five minutes.



One last bit of advice...

Ask yourself if you are using your time in the best possible way. Ask yourself the following questions: If I were being paid to accomplish my work as a student, would I deserve my salary?

And, one last resource...

Carleton University Psychology website:
www.procrastination.ca

Information in this pamphlet was provided by
The University of Ottawa.



Procrastination



2600 CTTC Building
613-520-6674

carleton.ca/health

Many students have difficulty sticking to a schedule or meeting deadlines. They continuously put off their work and/or give priority to less pressing tasks. Such procrastination often results in incomplete grades, poor performance, anxiety and a generally negative image of oneself. Follow the guidelines and suggestions in this pamphlet if you procrastinate. These alternative strategies can help you change your way of thinking and behaving.

PROCRASTINATION AND YOUR WAY OF THINKING

Here are a few cognitive distortions that are common among procrastinators:

- Overestimation of the time left to perform tasks
- Underestimation of the time required to complete tasks
- Overestimation of future motivational states
- Belief that succeeding at a task requires ideal working conditions: one must be in the mood, be sure of succeeding, wait for inspiration, feel ready, and so on . . .



HOW IT WORKS

Procrastination manifests itself in many ways, among which are the following:

- **A tendency to get “stuck” at the planning phase:** You draw out planning process in order to avoid confronting the issue. You argue, polish and perfect your plan, but you unnecessarily delay the implementation of the plan.
- **A tendency to do least important activities first:** The most popular being to watch television, to listen to music, to read magazines or newspapers, to eat, to cook, to sleep, to clean, to organize, to socialize or to shop.
- **A tendency to give in to spurious reasoning:** You continuously delay tackling a task that you feel hostility towards or a task that bores you and you let yourself be convinced by false excuses (i.e. you pretend to sincerely believe that the secondary tasks are of major importance).
- **A tendency to be a perfectionist:** You fuss over tasks long after they have been adequately achieved.
- **The last minute craze:** You get strong rushes of adrenaline when you manage to meet tight deadlines by completing assignments that you began at the last minute.

However, it is evident that last minute euphoria, despite the fact that it can be pleasant on many levels, can very easily become the dysphoria of an unfinished assignment. Here are a few useful tips to help avoid the procrastination trap. If you recognize yourself in the previous descriptions, read on!

USEFUL TIPS TO BREAK THE HABIT

Change your way of thinking

Have a **positive attitude** toward yourself. You need to tell yourself that you can change if you want to.

Be determined. Have the courage **to act and not to react.**

Deal with your fears and irrational beliefs by **setting realistic goals** (for your study assignments, for your expectations with regards to your performance, for the amount of time you have to study each day).

Deal with cop-outs. Don't let yourself be fooled by excuses.

Working Conditions

Determine exactly what makes you procrastinate (i.e. task, person, certain aspects of a situation).