



# Procrastination: How to Avoid Poor Time Management Habits

It doesn't take college students too long to realize that managing their time is one of the biggest challenges of being at school. With all that college has to offer, students may feel as though they are short on time, or they may be inclined to put important tasks off by procrastinating. Procrastination occurs when we intend to work on a project, but find that we can't get ourselves started. We can change our procrastination habits with persistence and by taking control of our attitudes, behaviors and the use of our time. The following key components affect how we proactively manage our time and meet our goals:

## ATTITUDE:

Challenge Negative Thoughts

## BEHAVIOR:

Create a Good Study Environment

## TIME:

Improve Time Management

### STEPS TOWARD PROCRASTINATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT RECOVERY

**Challenge Negative Thoughts:** What do you say to yourself that stops you from getting the work done? Learning to identify your ineffective self-talk will lead to more self-motivation, less procrastination, and better study attitudes. Practice turning negative messages into positive ones. When you catch yourself thinking some of the following thoughts, check them and replace them with more positive thoughts:

#### Examples of Self-defeating Thoughts

"This is so boring."  
"This is too hard."  
"I will do it later, I still have time."

#### Examples of More Positive Thoughts

"This will help me achieve my goals."  
"I'll do my best and ask for help if I don't understand."  
"I will start with small simple tasks now."

**Create a Good Study Environment:** Be mindful of how your study environment (time of day, alone or with others, sound, lighting, room temperature) impacts your learning capacity, productivity and overall motivation. Once you have found the time and place free of distractions and/or clutter, make a commitment to consistently follow a daily or weekly schedule to work on your project. The following are some examples of behaviors that can assist you to develop optimal study habits:

- Learn to say "NO..." If you are asked to do things that will take you away from pursuing your goals, say "No... I need to stick with my study plan right now."
- Control interruptions. Close your door and do not answer your phone (turn it off) when you're in the middle of studying.
- Eliminate clutter and distraction! File things away as soon as you don't need them anymore. TV and video games can be addictive. Ask yourself, "Do I really need to watch a rerun of X-files or play a video game now?"

#### **Improve Time Management:**

- Prioritize your work: Write down a list of tasks you need to accomplish; organize the list according to due dates.
- Keep tasks visible: Set up notifications on your phone, and use sticky notes as reminders.
- Break assignments down by looking at what needs to be done and the number of days available (e.g., set one day to write the outline, plan to write 3 pages the next day, do 2 pages the next and edit on the last day).
- Estimate how long each task will take you and record the time it actually takes.

## PROCRASTINATION QUIZ

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you act as though if you ignore a task it will go away?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you underestimate the work involved in the task?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you overestimate your abilities and resources in relationship to a task? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you persevere on only one portion of a task?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you believe that repeated "minor" delays are harmless?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you become paralyzed in deciding between alternative choices?            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Do you dramatize a commitment to a task rather than actually doing it?      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### HOW TO MAKE A "TO DO" LIST

A "To Do" list is a technique to aid you in better organizing and defining the tasks you need to complete and to help you become more efficient.

Example of an Effective "TO DO" List:

- Study Chemistry
  - Read Chapter 3, pp. 10-20
  - Review lecture notes from 10/1
  - Make flashcards of formulas
- Do Lab Report
  - Outline report
  - Write up report
  - Edit Report
- Write English Paper
  - Pick topic
  - Collect sources in library
  - Outline
  - Write paper



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