

Controlling Procrastination

Procrastination is putting off or avoiding doing something that you must do. It is natural to procrastinate occasionally. However, excessive procrastination can result in guilt feelings about not doing a task when it should be done. It can also cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done. Further, excessive procrastination can cause poor performance if you try to complete a task with little time remaining. In short, excessive procrastination can interfere with your school and personal success.

Twenty things you can do to control procrastination.

- Reward yourself when you complete a task on time. You can surf the Internet, have some ice cream, or do anything else that is a positive reinforcer for you.
- Prioritize the tasks you have to do. Putting tasks in priority order will avoid the problem of trying to decide where to begin.
- Work on tasks at the times you work best. Some students can get things going in the morning, while other students may be more comfortable working in the evening.
- Don't try to finish everything at once. Break tasks into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Work with a study group. The momentum of the other group members will carry you with them.
- Carefully schedule what you have to do. Stick to your schedule.
- Establish reasonable standards for completing a task. Striving for perfection can stop you from completing the task.
- Set specific goals and track your progress toward their accomplishment. This will help you avoid the feeling that the work before you is endless.
- Establish a comfortable place in which to do your work. You will be more inclined to do your work if your workspace is peaceful and inviting.
- Work for short periods of time. Set a timer for 15 minutes and take a short break when it goes off.
- Create a "to do" list at the start of each day. Keep the list to a reasonable length. Cross off each thing to do as you accomplish it.
- Don't sit around thinking about what you have to do. Stop thinking and start doing.

- If there is a particular task that you dread doing, force yourself to face it. Once you complete this task, your other tasks will seem like “a walk in the park.”
- Think about all of the benefits of completing a task. Use these thoughts as motivators.
- Use visual reminders of what you have to do. Post-it notes placed in prominent places (e.g., refrigerator door, computer screen, and mirror) will remind you that something needs to be done.
- Organize your workspace. Spending a lot of time “looking” for what you need to do a task is a classic form of procrastination.
- Use peer pressure. This works for Weight Watchers and can work for you. Identify a friend to whom you are accountable for getting your work done.
- Focus on starting a task rather than finishing it. Bring your focus from the future to the right now.
- Don't make too much of a task. Overvaluing a task can make you highly anxious. Anxiety can block your performance.
- Identify the ways in which you procrastinate. Take direct steps to eliminate these.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "You may delay, but time will not." Use the suggestions in this article to avoid delaying doing what you have to do and to ensure that time does not work against you.