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Student Success Tips:
Overcoming Procrastination



Everyone is guilty of procrastinating at one point or another. [Procrastination](#) is the act of purposely delaying or postponing something. Procrastinating your academic work can have harsh consequences, such as a poor grades, conflicts with group members on a group assignment, or increased stress and feelings of guilt.

Why do we procrastinate, even though we know it is not a good idea? We may procrastinate if we think a task is boring, too difficult, or we don't know where to start.

What does procrastination look like? You might be procrastinating if you fill your time with less important tasks and neglect working on important tasks. Or if you wait for the right mood or the right time to do a task. You may also spend a lot of time reading the directions for an assignment without actually doing anything for the assignment. These are all clues that you are procrastinating.

Are you a procrastinator? Take this [self-assessment](#) to get a general idea.

Addressing procrastination and overcoming it depends on why you procrastinated in the first place. Here are some strategies:

- If you procrastinate because a task seems unpleasant, the timing of that task can make a big difference. Mark Twain famously said "If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the bigger one first". By "[eating a frog first](#)", you are just starting your day or week by doing the most unpleasant task first. You will feel relief that the worst task is behind you, and it can lead to you not procrastinating on other tasks.
- If you have so many things to do that you procrastinate because you just don't know where to start, start by identifying what those tasks are and which ones are most

important/urgent. Use the [Eisenhower Principle](#) to organize your tasks. This is also a great way to find the tasks that are the most urgent/important, so those can be your “frogs” that you eat first.

- If you find a task or assignment too boring, make a game out of it. Draw pictures of the content, make up a song about it, or try to teach it to your 5-year-old cousin.
- Do something super small to get started. For example, if you are procrastinating on writing a paper, just open up a word document and put your name on the page. That is a start that can subconsciously get your mind more motivated to keep working on it.
- Find an [accountability buddy](#) (“accountabili-buddy”). For example, have a friend from your class message you once a week to ask if you are on track with an assignment. Sometimes a little bit of peer pressure and knowing that someone else is aware of your goals can help motivate you not to procrastinate.
- If you are using electronics such as your computer or phone as an excuse to procrastinate, remove them from your space so you are not tempted to use them. You can also turn on some apps that block distractions, such as [Leech Block](#), [Freedom](#), or [Toggl](#).
- If you procrastinate because a task is boring, use a [reward system](#). Promise yourself small rewards along the way, and a larger reward once you finish the entire task. For example, you might reward yourself with a scoop of your favorite ice cream for each chapter that you finish reading of your textbook, or buying yourself a new purse when you finish a term paper.

Try some of these small anti-procrastination steps during your next study session and see which ones work best for you.