



Managing procrastination

Recognising when you are procrastinating

You know you are procrastinating when you keep avoiding or delaying doing a task you need to do – for example, getting started on writing an assignment.

Almost everyone procrastinates at least some of the time, but it can become a habit leading to increased stress and anxiety.

The good news is that procrastination is a learned behaviour, so it can be unlearned!

Step 1

Challenge beliefs that encourage you to put things off until the last minute, such as:

- I always work better under pressure.
- I don't know how to do this task, so I'll put it off until I know how to do it.
- I find it easier to work when I feel like it.
- I waited until the last moment before and it worked out okay.
- If I wait until the last minute, I won't spend so much time on it.
- If I do this work right now, I might miss out on something more important.
- I've got better things to do right now. I'll do it later!
- If I do it at the last minute I'll have more information / better ideas.

If you find yourself putting things off, think about why you are procrastinating – for example, you may be unsure about where to start.

For further help with starting/finishing your study tasks, visit our [academic support](#) page.

Step 2

Develop good study habits and beliefs that support you.

Know yourself

- Acknowledge when you are procrastinating and why.
- Challenge each reason you give for procrastinating.
- Know that you can get help with getting started (and with finishing tasks).

Practical strategies

- Begin with an aspect of a difficult task that you enjoy.
- Break up difficult or 'boring' work into smaller tasks. This will help you achieve each task more easily.
- Complete the easiest task first to get you started (or the most difficult task, to get it out of the way!).

Plan your time

- Plan your time and stick to your plan:
 - but make changes if you need to.
- Set realistic deadlines that aren't too restrictive:
 - and monitor your progress.
- Avoid striving for perfection.
- Consider the time you have available and work out what you can realistically do in that time:
 - and if you're unsure, consult with a friend to see if you are being realistic.
- Eliminate time-wasting activities.

Examples of procrastination habits

- Excessive housework.
- Excessive physical exercise.
- Excessive socialising.

Study-life balance

- Create a balance between studying, keeping healthy and enjoying life.
- Reward yourself every time you complete a task.

Best time to start

The best time to start an assignment or project is as soon as you get it.

Tips

- Break down your assignment/project into separate tasks.
- Plan the time you will need to spend on each task.

Unlearning procrastinating habits



1. Notice how you procrastinate

For example, do you watch TV, doom scroll on your phone, or do unnecessary chores?

The more aware you are of *when* and *why* you are procrastinating, the more likely you will be able to recognise your procrastination habits. Try asking yourself: *What am I putting off/avoiding?*

2. Plan your study time

Have a clear purpose for each study session.

- When you break large tasks into smaller tasks, make a note of when you intend to complete each task.
- When you finish, check that you have completed the task in the time you set yourself (it's okay if not – but setting a specific time and sticking to it will help you manage your time and avoid 'over-thinking' tasks).

3. Make a note

Make a note of any concerns that might stop you from keeping to your time goals. For example:

- "I need to do more research".
- "It won't be good enough".

Write down ways you intend to manage these concerns if they arise.

For example, "I'll write the first draft *then* decide if I need to do more research".

4. Remind yourself

There is no such thing as a “perfect” essay or assignment.

5. Monitor your progress

If your study plan isn't realistic, change it – but make sure changing it is not just a chance to procrastinate!

- Make a specific time to change your timetable.
- Change it, then go back to whatever you should be studying, writing or reading.

6. Reward yourself

Complete the goals or tasks you set for yourself, then catch up with friends, watch TV, or whatever makes you feel good about what you've achieved.

Did you know?

- Rewarding yourself for achieving your goals or completing tasks is important.
- Rewards motivate you to achieve further goals.
- Rewards make you feel good each time you finish a task.