

Avoiding Procrastination

Why is avoiding procrastination important?

Did you know that out of the 168 hours in a week, the average college student will spend 147 hours in class, studying, eating, sleeping, attending to personal habits, and socializing. How efficiently these, and the additional 21 other hours are spent, will help determine how successful you are in classes and everything else you attempt to accomplish. Planning time and avoiding procrastination are two key components to time management, leading to a balanced life and more free time to participate in everything you do.

Question: How well do you currently combat procrastination and what are your current strategies, if any?

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Procrastination means putting things off until a future time, postponing, or deferring something. Most people have procrastinated at some point in their lives. There are many ways to deal with procrastination:

- Set realistic goals. Do not try to do too much and do not try to do everything perfectly.
- Do schoolwork when your energy level is at its highest (e.g. If you are a morning person, do school work in the morning.)
- Break large tasks into smaller ones. You do not want to be overwhelmed by the work you need to do.
- Work for realistic periods of time. If you work best at one hour intervals, do not try to cram in two hours of study.
- Follow your own needs; do not study for long periods just because your friends do.
- Avoid study marathons (all-nighters.) Research shows that students who do not get adequate sleep can have a more difficult time memorizing and storing information, a key benefit of a full night's rest.
- Mix activities. Switch subjects after a while, or try to alternate between doing things you enjoy with things you find challenging or boring.
- Create an effective place to do your schoolwork. Keep distractions to a minimum. Do not forget the importance of good lighting and make sure you have access to the materials and equipment you need.
- Allow extra time for unexpected things. This means planning for things taking longer than you expect or dealing with technology-related issues.
- Schedule time for yourself—sleep, exercise, relaxation, and socializing.
- Reward yourself when you have finished tasks on time. Make sure the reward is suitable for the difficulty of the task and time you spent on it.

If procrastination is a very serious problem for you and is having a significant effect on your ability to complete your course, you should talk to someone who is experienced in discussing these issues with students (an academic support advisor or university counselor). There may be an underlying issue which can prevent you from studying; an expert will be able to help identify and address these problems.

Tip for Success

If you find you do not have enough time to complete your tasks, **keep a time use diary**— set an alarm on the hour and write down *everything* you did during the past hour (be honest!) Then examine if you are trying to accomplish too much or are becoming distracted without realizing it.



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Getting Organized: Creating a Week's Plan

Planning ahead of time is a great way to stay on top of everything you need to accomplish. Follow these steps:

1. Make a list of everything you need to do during a typical week. Include ALL activities—not just school work.
2. Convert your list to a calendar format and add related activities (readings for courses, study sessions, practice.)
3. Prioritize your activities. What do you do if you find you have less time than you anticipated? You should determine the importance of each activity and use this to revise your schedule. To help, place a number signaling how important and activity is next to it on your calendar and use those rankings to adjust, if needed.

Are you a Procrastinator?

Read each statement and assign a number value base on which best describes your behavior.

1= Never 2= Occasionally 3= Often 4= Always

1. ___ I feel I have to "cram" before an exam.
2. ___ My homework is turned in on time.
3. ___ I think I get enough sleep.
4. ___ I pull all-nighters before mid-terms and finals.
5. ___ I plan activities with friends or family a couple of nights a week.
6. ___ When I am working on a paper, I put off writing until a few days before it is due.
7. ___ I cancel social activities because I feel I do not have enough time.
8. ___ I get my papers in on time.
9. ___ I find myself making a lot of excuses to my instructors about why my work is not done.
10. ___ I feel comfortable about how I use time now.
11. ___ I feel that something is hanging over my head and that I will never have enough time to do the work assigned.
12. ___ I feel tired.

Add up the numbers for questions 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12. Then add up 2, 3, 5, 8 and 10. If your first number is higher, you are probably a procrastinator. If the second number is higher, you manage your time well. If you do procrastinate, try some of the tips on the previous page and find what best works for you.

RESOURCES

University Counseling Service

3223 Westlawn South

319-335-7294

ucs@uiowa.edu

<http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/>

Academic Support & Retention

310 Calvin Hall

319-335-1497

tutoriowa@uiowa.edu

<http://tutor.uiowa.edu>

Works Cited:

www.ugcc.edu/counselingservices/Time-Management.pdf

www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicservices/documents/college%20success%20brocures/time%20Management.pdf

learninghigher.ac.uk/resources/files/Time%20management/time_how_succeed_1.pdf