

Avoiding Procrastination

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 your time and avoiding procrastination are two key components to time management, to help you to meet your goals and participate in everything you do.

Procrastination means putting a task off until a later time, postponing, or deferring something. Most of us have procrastinated at some point in our lives. The good news is that there are many ways to prevent procrastination.

- **Set realistic goals.** Don't try to do too much and don't try to do everything perfectly.
- **Do schoolwork when your energy level is at its highest.** For example, if you are a morning person, do school work in the morning.
- **Break large tasks into smaller ones.** You don't want to feel overwhelmed by the work you need to accomplish. Break one large task into 3-5 smaller tasks so the work appears more manageable.
- **Work for realistic periods of time.** If you work best at one hour intervals, don't try to cram in two hours of studying. Study for one hour, take a 10-minute break, and then study for another hour.
- **Follow your own needs.** Don't study for long periods just because your friends do.
- **Avoid study marathons (all-nighters).** Research shows that students who don't get adequate sleep can have a more difficult time memorizing and storing information, an advantage to getting a full night's rest.
- **Have a routine sleep schedule.** Research shows having a sleep schedule helps you focus more and maintain alertness.
- **Mix activities.** Alternate subjects every half hour/ hour, or try to alternate between doing things you enjoy with things you find challenging or boring. For example, homework for your favorite class and homework for your most challenging class.
- **Find an adequate place to do your work.** Keep distractions to a minimum. Don't forget the importance of good lighting and make sure you have access to the materials and equipment you need.
- **Allow extra time for unexpected occurrences.** Plan for assignments or study sessions that may take longer than you expect. Anticipate dealing with technology/internet related issues.
- **Schedule time for yourself.** Sleep, exercise, relax, and socialize with your down time.
- **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. For example, if you spent two hours studying for your math exam, reward yourself by spending 30- 40 minutes socializing with your friends.

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 advisor or a 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 don't 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!

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 midterms 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 probably manage your time well. If you do procrastinate, try some of the tips on the previous page and find what best works for you.

