

How to Overcome Procrastination

Everyone puts off tasks—whether it's class assignments, contacting customer service, or having an awkward conversation with your roommate about their dirty dishes laying around. A little procrastination is normal, but it's important to recognize when that procrastination is getting in the way of you completing important tasks.

Reasons You Might Procrastinate and How to Overcome Them:

Reason #1: Payoff for the task is far away

Solution: Remind yourself how this task will get you one step closer to your long-term goals. For example studying now will help you pass your test which will allow you to pass the class you are currently in.

Reason #2: The assignment is large and feels overwhelming

Solution: Break your task into smaller steps. For example: when working on a 12-page paper, determine when you want to do your research and then how many pages you want to write each day to get a rough draft done in time for revision. If you get stuck on the introduction, skip it and come back to it after you write the rest of your paper. [Backwards Planning](#) is a great way to set specific deadlines for each step of a larger project.

Reason #3: The task makes you feel anxious/nervous

All of us have tasks that make us nervous. Some people hate public speaking. Other people feel anxious making phone calls or going to their professor's office hours for help. To get around these nerves try:

- Taking a friend with you (when possible)
- Writing out a script and practice it several times
- Remembering how relieved you felt once you were done with something else that made you anxious

Reason #4: Perfectionism has you afraid of making mistakes

Some of your anxiety regarding a task might come from perfectionism. If you find yourself hesitating to start a task because you don't think you can do it perfectly, remind yourself that doing something imperfectly is better than not doing it at all. If it's a project or a paper, let your first draft be messy and then revise it. After all, you can't revise a blank page. Seek out feedback from your professor and/or a writing consultant to make the final version as good as it can be.

Reason #5: You have a lot to do and are feeling decision paralysis

Unfortunately if you keep procrastinating, it's only a matter of time before things pile up. Sometimes your challenge isn't even procrastination. College is a busy time and some weeks are just busier than others. If you're starting to panic and can't decide where to start, take a breath. Write everything down that you need to do. Next, take a 10 minute break and clear your head (walk, listen to music, take a shower, etc). Then sit back down with your list and figure out your priorities. Identify any tasks you can delegate or tasks you can ask for an extension on. Take one step at a time and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Reason #6: You simply don't enjoy the thing you're supposed to be doing

It could be a chore you hate doing, homework that feels very tedious, a boring errand like going to the DMV. You procrastinate these things not because they're difficult, but because you would rather do anything else. Sadly, there is no magical solution to finding the motivation to do these tasks. You are going to have to tap into your discipline and do them even though you really don't want to. If needed, promise yourself a reward for when you're done. Alternatively, find a friend who is willing to do the boring tasks with you so you have company.

Other Resources:

[Procrastination](#) from UNC's Learning Center

[Procrastination: The Basics](#) from Oregon State University's Academic Success Center.

[6 Reasons People Procrastinate](#) from Oregon State University's Academic Success Center.