
Procrastination and Motivation

Good news! Giving up procrastination and developing motivation is not complicated, and they are not static traits. For example, a person can exhibit procrastinating behavior and be intensely motivated and productive a few hours later. If you recognize that you are procrastinating, ask yourself “What, specifically, is causing me to procrastinate?” Recognizing the sources and signs of procrastination are the first steps toward implementing changes in your studying techniques. The following information and tips will help manage procrastination and increase motivation.

Why do students procrastinate?

1. Boredom
2. Avoidance of disliked tasks
3. Distractions
4. Feeling intimidated
5. Feeling overwhelmed
6. Lack of time management skills
7. Inability to prioritize
8. High degree of anxiety/fear of failing
9. Confusion over course/assignment requirements
10. Perfectionism and the resulting unrealistic standards

Recognize when you are procrastinating and help yourself with these tips:

1. Get started by just picking up a book or piece of paper “to see what happens.”
 - a. If this method helps you begin a study or work session, you can decide to either continue to work or take a five-minute break first.
 - b. Take regular breaks after 45-60 minutes of studying, but limit your breaks to 5-15 minutes.
2. Plan ahead so that you are able to prioritize and get down to work well before an assignment is due.
3. Move deadlines up to simulate working under pressure if that is when you accomplish the most.
4. Break up larger tasks into smaller, manageable tasks and tackle one or more parts daily. Check off each part as you go so that you can see your progress. This (chunking) technique breaks large, complex, and intimidating assignments into smaller, manageable steps. For example, you could use the chunking technique for the first draft of a paper; start by simply reading the assignment criteria.
5. Write at least one “intention statement” each day. For example, if you are procrastinating about starting a term paper, you could declare: “I will write a list of six possible topics by noon today. Then I will reward myself with an hour of socializing.” Write your intention in a visible place, and replace it with another intention when it is complete.
6. Announce your intention to a friend or classmate and ask them to hold you accountable (or hold each other accountable) to support your anti-procrastination efforts.

7. Establish goals for yourself: short-, mid-, and long-range. As you work towards achieving these goals, recognize the negative effects that procrastination will have.
8. Do it now! As soon as you notice yourself procrastinating, dive into the task in any way you can. Getting started on a task is often the hardest part, and once you create momentum it should help you to continue to move forward.
9. Choose the best time of day and location for you to study. Eliminate distractions including people, noise, electronics, etc.
10. Gather all of your supplies the day before you plan to work on a task, including a lunch. These preparations will make it easier to get going and more difficult to procrastinate.

Motivation

Most students start the semester with good intentions and a strong motivation to succeed. For many students, however, motivation starts to fade around heavy study and assignment periods. This means that you need to find a way to motivate yourself to stay on track. View motivation as a good habit and develop it with practice.

The following are some tips to help maximize motivation:

- Select a program and courses that are interesting to you.
- Be clear about your short-, mid-, and long-term goals for studying.
- Create effective study habits by setting up a daily study routine including:
 - Creating a time management plan with regularly scheduled study sessions;
 - Finding suitable study space(s) free from distractions.
- Develop a reward system for achieving short-, mid-, and long-term goals.
- Form a study group to hold each other accountable.
- It is important to focus on actions (good habits), which you have control over, and not feelings, which can change frequently.
- Ask for support if you need it. There are many valuable resources on campus available free of charge to help you overcome procrastination and maximize motivation. For example:
 - Speak with a study skills tutor in the ASC who can offer tips and support to help you minimize procrastination and maximize motivation.
- Don't be unnecessarily hard on yourself. Encourage yourself and focus on the positive.
- If you complete a task you said you would, don't forget to reward yourself!
 - Do something that you find relaxing. For example, go for a walk, watch an episode of your favourite TV show, or treat yourself at the coffee shop.

References

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