

Tell us what you think!



## STUDY SKILLS AND PROCRASTINATION

Check out the evidence!

### What is procrastination?

Procrastination is knowingly **putting off an important task** we have the skills to complete, even when we know there will be negative consequences.<sup>9</sup>



50%

of students report procrastinating on school assignments.<sup>4</sup>

Procrastination is normal!



### Why do we procrastinate?

TRUE OR FALSE?

We procrastinate because we're lazy and have bad time management.

False!

Sometimes this can happen, but most often, we **procrastinate when we're anxious or feel negatively** about the task in question.<sup>9</sup>



Sam is anxious about an exam and needs to study.

"I can't even look at this right now, because it's stressing me out."

"That's a 'future me' problem."

"Why worry about this today when I can put it off until tomorrow?"

Pushing the task off gives us a **short-term mood booster**.<sup>9</sup>

We make the task a problem for "future us".<sup>9</sup>

Even if there are possible negative consequences (e.g., not enough time to study sufficiently).<sup>9</sup>



### 1) Performance Anxiety

- The worry that we won't be able to do a task well enough can **lead us to avoid** the task!



"It makes me FEEL like a failure"

- Facing the difficulty of the task can be extremely aversive.



### 2) Perfectionistic thoughts

When we expect ourselves to be perfect, this can actually paralyze us – so we procrastinate.<sup>2</sup>

We feel that we are not worth anything if we do not achieve our expectations, **and therefore do nothing**.<sup>2</sup>



We think success = our self worth

View the Enhancing Performance page for Self-criticism & Self-compassion!

Being self-compassionate, or directing kindness towards ourselves



can help **quiet our self-critical voice**.

"If I don't do really well on this assignment, then I'm a failure."

**Q:** What would we say to our friend who said this?



**A:** We would tell them that they're **not a failure** because of their performance on **ONE** assignment!

### 3) Self-sabotaging

When we are afraid of failing a task we do things that purposefully stop us from doing our best.<sup>1</sup>



We are afraid the reason we won't do well is because of our own abilities, so we try to assign this failure to external reasons.<sup>1</sup>

We go out the night before an exam,



so we write it sleep-deprived and not feeling well.<sup>13</sup>

Doing poorly on an assignment we left until the last minute



prevents us from knowing how we would have done if we had given the task proper effort.<sup>13</sup>

When we self-sabotage, we believe that our intelligence and abilities are fixed and cannot be changed.

This is called having a FIXED MINDSET<sup>3</sup>

Having a growth mindset can help keep us from self-criticizing but can also actually help us do better in school.<sup>3</sup>



GROWTH MINDSET<sup>3</sup>

Believing we can develop our intelligence and abilities through learning and growing.

View the Managing Expectations resource!

#### FIXED vs. GROWTH mindset

"This assignment is really challenging – I'm likely going to fail."

VS.

"This assignment is really challenging me – this is an opportunity for me to grow in this area."

"I didn't meet my goal for this – I'm a failure."

VS.

"I didn't meet my goal on this – this just means I've learned new things for next time."

"I'm struggling with this task – I'm never going to get it."

VS.

"I'm really struggling with this task – this just means I haven't mastered it yet."

### 4) Fear of Success

Sometimes, success has certain consequences that make us feel anxious. We don't want to feel anxious, so we procrastinate.



If we're the first person in our family to graduate university, this may distance us from them and threaten those relationships.<sup>7</sup>



Or, being in a top position means other people will want to challenge you for that same position.<sup>7</sup>



Succeeding may also mean more responsibility or pressure to make decisions.<sup>7</sup>

#### What happens when we procrastinate?

TRUE OR FALSE?

"I work better under a deadline."



False!

Procrastination actually negatively impacts our academic performance<sup>12</sup> and increases our experience of stress, anxiety, and depression.<sup>8, 11</sup>

# What can we do when we procrastinate?

**Good news:** procrastination is something we can change!

As procrastination happens when we have difficulty coping, **we can learn coping strategies** to manage our:



time



emotions



behaviours

Gaining study skills to help manage our academic work can also **lessen procrastination** by:



giving ourselves confidence in exams, being more effective at studying, feeling more well-prepared,

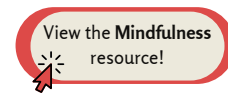
which will make us feel more **motivated**.



## Coping strategies

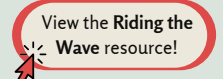


Using **mindfulness** can help us be aware of our negative emotions around tasks which can lead to procrastination.<sup>10</sup>



Sometimes, we may react to intense negative emotions by procrastinating.

- When we **observe our uncomfortable emotions instead of reacting**, this can help us learn to better respond to difficult emotions instead of procrastinating.
- Instead of trying to 'fix' the way we feel, we can **notice our emotion without judgement, accept the feeling, and watch the intensity** of the emotion pass.



## Changing our behaviours:

To help change our behaviours, we can create study and work habits that help prevent procrastination.

If you tend to be distracted by your phone, you can use apps that force you to leave your phone alone.



The app Forest grows a tree as long as you don't close the app! You can set a timer for how long you want to study or stay off your phone.



### Set deadlines

If we know the paper is due in two weeks, we can **set a deadline for each section**.



E.g. "By Monday, I want the introduction done; by Wednesday, the body paragraphs."

### Make a study plan!

- This is especially important when we have several projects due.
- Write down the deadlines for all our assignments and tests, and backtrack to see how much time we may need for each one to work on the assignment or study for the test.



"The exam is on Friday and the paper is due next week, so on Monday morning I will start making notes for my the exam and in the afternoon and evening, I will write an outline for the paper and collect references."

## Monitor our progress

This way we can see if we have enough time before our deadline to finish, or if we need to spend some extra time getting it done.

Check off each section that you've completed! It gives us a **sense of accomplishment and motivation**.



If you have trouble getting started, **set a timer for 10 minutes** and do the task for 10 minutes, whether this is studying or writing a paper or cleaning.



This can help us find a groove and keep working.<sup>7</sup>

It doesn't have to be perfect! Just get started.

## Planning ahead



To set achievable goals, try using the **SMART** goal framework.<sup>6</sup> SMART goals are:

**S**pecific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**elevant **T**ime-bound



View the **Improving Time Management** resource!

"I will read 5 pages of this week's textbook chapter every day."

If our goal is too general or we're not even sure what it should be, **break it down** first.



Buy an agenda and **USE IT**

- Once you have all your syllabi, take all your known assignment and test dates and write them in your agenda.
- Check it at the beginning of every week.



View the **Time Management Self-Assessment!**

When writing down your due dates, write a reminder to yourself 2 weeks ahead of time. This way **you won't forget** they're coming up.

If you don't like agendas, use whatever calendar app you most prefer (e.g., Gmail, Outlook, etc.).

## Social Support

Having **accountability** with friends, family, or a study group is a great way to make sure you get things done.

Study with friends at the library as it can be easier to hold each other accountable.



**Join a study group**

Reach out to people in class or in your program about meeting regularly to study for exams or to work on tough assignments.



## Tackle the most difficult task first.



Start your day with the most difficult task



This way, the rest of the day can be dedicated to more enjoyable tasks



We also feel **more accomplished**, so our motivation is increased for the rest of the day.

## Give yourself incentives.

When you finish a difficult assignment or are trying to get through a long reading, **give yourself a reward** at the end.



This can be anything! Any small reward, like getting a coffee or going for a walk or playing with a pet.



## Study skills

It is important to strengthen our skills in note-taking and exam-taking.

- When note-taking, we want to ensure we are taking down the **important information** your professor is sharing in the lecture.
- Check the PowerPoint slides for the **main points** and notice what the professor is focusing on.
- Ask the TA if there was any content you were unsure about.



When doing readings, focus on the bolded words or do the “check-ins” textbooks often have at the end of chapters. This will **help focus our attention** on the right information.



**Writing out notes and saying them out loud** can help us remember them better.

- It can be helpful to use **acronyms & mnemonics** to memorize info for a test.
  - First thing you do is jot down these BEFORE looking through the test/exam questions!
- If you are in an exam and you feel you are not doing well, or it’s going badly, don’t leave the exam and risk a zero.
  - Put aside that it's going badly and **try your best!** Keep in mind – even if you have a failing grade like 48%, it can still contribute to your final mark in the course and is better than a zero.



### Taking an exam is a skill.

*Different exams require different approaches, whether they are multiple choice, short-answer or essay-based.*

#### Multiple choice

If you get stuck on a question, **circle it and come back.**



Do the **questions you know first** and then do the ones that require more thinking time. Guess if you have to!

#### Short-answer

Often the number of points the short-answer is worth tells us roughly how many points to make.

- If you feel short on time, **tackle the questions worth the most points** first.
- Go through the questions and jot down some points on the side so you don’t forget.



If a definition question is worth two points, define the term (1 point) and give an example (1 point).

#### Essay question

Try to guess what types of questions the test will be on or create mind maps about more complex topics.

If you know the questions ahead of time, make an outline with a thesis and your main arguments.



Write a **basic essay outline** on the back of the exam.



This will help you **write better and faster** on the exam!



This way, you can keep referring back to it and can just **focus** on writing.

## FEEDBACK & CONTACT INFORMATION

