

Self-help Strategies to overcome procrastination

1. Motivate yourself to work on a task with thoughts such as "There is no time like the present," or "Nobody's perfect".
2. Prioritise the tasks you have to do.
3. Commit yourself to completing a task once started.
4. Adopt the 5 minute rule, promise yourself you will work for 5 minutes and then for 5 minutes more and so on.
5. Reward yourself whenever you complete a task.
6. Work on tasks at the time you work best.
7. Break the task down into several smaller steps. Estimate how much time each step will take. Set a deadline for each step. Write your plan down.
8. Work on tasks as part of a study group.
9. Get help from lecturers and other students when you find a task difficult.
10. Make a schedule of the tasks you have to do and stick to it.
11. Eliminate distractions that interfere with working on tasks. These include:
 - Internal distractions e.g. personal/relationship/emotional concerns
 - External distractions e.g. cellphone, television, music
12. Set reasonable standards that allow you to meet a task.
13. Take breaks when working on a task so that you do not tire.
14. Work on difficult and/or unpleasant tasks first.
15. Work on a task you find easier after you complete a difficult task.
16. Find a consistent and suitable study space.
17. Above all, think positively and get going. Remain focused and motivate yourself to work on a task with positive self talk.

Once you are involved in a task, you will probably find that it is more interesting than you thought it would be and not as difficult as you feared. You will feel increasingly relieved as you work toward its accomplishment and will come to look forward to the feeling of satisfaction you will experience when the task is completed.

Please remember if you feel you need some help with overcoming the problem of procrastination, or would like to talk about any of your study-related or personal concerns please do not hesitate to make an appointment at the Student Counselling Centre.

This is an initiative of the
Student Counselling Centre
Durban University of Technology
Lower Library Complex
Steve Biko Campus
Telephone: 031 373 2266
www.dut.ac.za



Department of
**student
counselling
and health**

Developed by
Msawenkosi Gift Buthelezi
Intern Psychologist
Edited by
Anita Da Silva Pita
Counselling Psychologist

procrastination

Procrastination

Procrastination is a particularly challenging problem for many university students.

What is Procrastination?

Procrastination is putting off or avoiding doing something that must be done. It is a type of behaviour which is characterised by a delaying of actions or tasks to a later time. Procrastination is a way of coping with the fear associated with starting or completing any task or decision. It is normal to procrastinate occasionally, but if this becomes a problem and affects your progress, then it needs to be addressed.

Excessive Procrastination can:

- result in wasting essential time and energy
- result in guilt feelings about not doing a task when it should be done
- cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done
- cause poor performance if the task is completed without sufficient time to do it well
- interfere with school and personal success

Why Do I Procrastinate?

In order to understand and solve your procrastination difficulties, you must carefully analyse those situations where your work is not being completed. Firstly, determine whether the cause is poor time management; if so, you will need to learn and develop time management skills. If, however, you know how to manage your time but don't make use of those skills you may have a more serious problem. Many individuals cite the following reasons for avoiding work:

- Perfectionism
- Expecting such a high standard of performance on a task that meeting such an expectation is impossible
- Fear of Failure

- Lacking confidence and fearing not being able to accomplish a task successfully
- Confusion
- Being unsure about how to start a task or how it should be completed
- Work-load
- Being overwhelmed by the size of the project
- Task Difficulty
- Lacking the skills and abilities needed to accomplish a task
- Poor Motivation
- Having little or no interest in completing a task because the task is found to be boring or lacking in relevance
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Having too many things around that distract one from doing a task
- Task Unpleasantness
- Disliking doing what a task requires.
- Lack of Priorities
- Having little or no sense about which tasks are most important to do

Are you a Procrastinator?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I often put off starting a task I find difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often give up on a task as soon as I start to find it difficult.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often wonder why I should be doing a task.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often have difficulty getting started on a task.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often try to do so many tasks at once that I cannot do any of them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often put off a task in which I have little or no interest.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often try to come up with reasons to do something other than a task I have to do.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often ignore a task when I am not certain about how to start it or complete it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often start a task but stop before completing it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often find myself thinking that if I ignore a task, it will go away.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often cannot decide which of a number of tasks I should complete first.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I often find my mind wandering to things other than the task on which I am trying to work.

Do this quiz to find out - place a tick next to the statements that you agree with.

Score: You are a procrastinator if you agree with five or more of the above statements

Overcoming Procrastination

Overcoming procrastination usually involves better organisational and time-management skills. It is also important to have a clearer understanding of the personal or emotional meaning of your tendency to procrastinate. The former skills can be learnt and improved with practice. Although there are some useful tips that can help you improve, it is primarily a matter of finding the ways of working that best suite you rather than trying to rigidly follow someone else's model.

Counselling can help you to understand and change the personal and/or emotional aspects of your procrastination.