

Navigate Procrastination

"Putting it off until tomorrow" sometimes makes sense, but it usually causes added stress. The usual remedies such as making a schedule may not get you moving. However, there are some approaches which **do** help:

1. Determine why you're procrastinating. Common reasons include feeling the task is overwhelming, feeling rebellious in the face of demands, fearing imperfection or failure, having too much unstructured time so that waiting until later seems reasonable, having an unrealistic concept of how long a task will take, or simply not feeling like you want to do it.

2. Match your approach to your reasons for procrastinating. For example:

- If the task seems overwhelming, break it down into its component parts, making sure that each part is small. Write down your plan.
- If you rebel against demands, consider the benefits to you if you do the task. Change "I have to" or "I should" to "I choose to."
- If you fear failure, remind yourself that the task doesn't have to be done perfectly; it just has to be done.
- If you have a lot of unstructured time, structure some of it by scheduling the component parts of the task. Deadlines can motivate and energize.
- If you aren't good at estimating how long tasks take, start paying more attention to the clock and ask other people for their estimates.
- If you don't feel like you want to do the task, identify what hours of the day you are able to be your most focused and productive and try schedule work during those times. Also, pay attention to your work environment. Having a comfortable and pleasant work environment increases motivation.

3. Incorporate expert advice.

- Use S.M.A.R.T. goals. Remember the acronym stands for goals that are **S**pecific, **M**asurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**imely.
- Optimize your chances for success (Anticipate problems and avoid them.)
- Set beginning and ending times for working on designated tasks.
- Don't wait until you "feel like it."
- Capitalize on the energy short bursts of work.
- Ask for help when you get stuck. Spinning your wheels doesn't move you forward.
- Explore resources related to time management. Some good podcasts to tune into are *Hurry Slowly*, *Beyond the To-Do List*, and *Collegehood Advice*. Recommended books include *Procrastination* by Yuen and Burka, *The Checklist Manifesto* by Atul Gawande, and *First Things First* by Covey, Merrill, and Merrill.