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Explore our latest gallery of Editors’ Picks.Browse Editors' Favorites Procrastination is the act of unnecessarily postponing decisions or actions. It’s a common problem, which can cause many issues, like missed opportunities and increased stress.If you’re reading this, you’re probably struggling with procrastination, or are trying to help someone who is. You’ve probably also tried to overcome procrastination before, and found it hard to do so.This guide is a definitive source on how to stop procrastinating, which will help you finally solve this problem. It’s based on hundreds of scientific research papers, and contains a systematic approach you can use to overcome procrastination, together with a list of anti-procrastination techniques, and tips for using them effectively.How to stop procrastinatingTo stop procrastinating right now, identify the smallest possible step you can take to make progress toward your goals, and try to start with just that tiny step, while giving yourself permission to make mistakes during the attempt. For example, if you need to write an essay, you can decide to start by writing just a single word, while accepting that it won’t be perfect, and might even be quite bad at first.In addition, you can make it easier for yourself to get started first, for example by preparing your tools without yet trying to start working, and also make it harder to procrastinate, for example by removing distractions from your environment.To overcome procrastination in the long term, do the following:Set specific and realistic goals. For example, if you want to start exercising, a good goal might be “be able to run a full mile by the end of the month”, while bad goals might be “get in shape” (unspecific) and “run a marathon by the end of the month” (unrealistic).Assess your procrastination. First, identify cases in which you delay unnecessarily, to figure out what exactly you procrastinate on (e.g., studying) and how you do it (e.g., by browsing social media). Then, think about those situations to also figure out where and when you procrastinate (e.g., at home or the library, on starting or finishing tasks, in the morning or evening). Finally, figure out why you procrastinate (e.g., due to perfectionism, fear, anxiety, depression, ADHD, sensation seeking, or abstract goals), potentially after reading about why people procrastinate.Create an action plan. It should involve using relevant anti-procrastination techniques, which account for the goals that you set and the nature of your procrastination problem.Implement your plan. Make sure to reflect on your progress and refine your approach, primarily by figuring out which techniques work for you and how you can implement them most effectively.The following are key anti-procrastination techniques you can use, which are presented in more detail in the next section:Break tasks into manageable steps (e.g., into sub-tasks that you can easily complete).Commit to a tiny first step (e.g., to working for just 2 minutes).Give yourself permission to make mistakes (e.g., by accepting that your work won’t be perfect).Make it easier to take action (e.g., by preparing everything you need in advance).Make tasks more enjoyable (e.g., by listening to music while you do them).Make it harder to procrastinate (e.g., by removing potential distractions).Delay before indulging the impulse to procrastinate (e.g., by counting to 10 first).Set deadlines (e.g., by deciding that you’ll complete a certain task by noon tomorrow).Plan how you’ll handle obstacles (e.g., by deciding that if X happens, then you’ll do Y).Identify and address your fears (e.g., by considering what advice you’d give to a friend).Increase your motivation (e.g., by marking streaks of days on which you achieve your goals).Increase your energy (e.g., by taking necessary breaks).Improve your environment (e.g., by adding reminders of your goals).Use social techniques (e.g., by emulating a role model).Use time-management techniques (e.g., by alternating consistently between work and rest).Create starting rituals (e.g., by counting down from five before taking action).Start with your best or worst task (e.g., with your easiest or hardest one).Develop self-efficacy (e.g., by reflecting on your successes).Develop self-compassion (e.g., by reminding yourself that everyone makes mistakes).Treat underlying conditions (e.g., ADHD).You can use any combination of techniques that you want, but should start by focusing on a few that seem most relevant to you given your specific situation.You’ll likely benefit from writing things down, such as your goals and plan. This can have various benefits, like helping you think more clearly and making your decisions feel more concrete.You can use a similar approach as an intervention to help someone else stop procrastinating, by doing the above on their behalf, doing it together with them, or encouraging them to do it themselves.Finally, remember that imperfect action is generally better than no action, so you’ll benefit more from trying to do just a bit of the above, than from getting stuck doing nothing at all. Also, the longer you delay, the more likely you are to do nothing, so you should start right now, while understanding that you’ll probably get some things wrong at first, but that you’ll be able to improve your approach over time. If you feel overwhelmed, just start with the first technique in this section (committing to a tiny step), until you feel ready to do more.Anti-procrastination techniquesBreak tasks into manageable stepsFor example, if you need to write a paper, you can break this down into steps like choosing a topic, finding sources, and writing the introduction.This unpacking technique can have various benefits, including helping you plan your work and making large tasks feel less overwhelming. When using it, it could help to:Unpack only a small part of the task each time (e.g., only your next 3 steps).Identify steps that you can complete in a single session, without requiring a break.Remind yourself that “the way to eat an elephant is a bite at a time”, meaning that you can handle big projects using a consistent step-by-step approach.Commit to a tiny first stepFor example, you can sit down intending to only write a single sentence on your thesis, or go to the gym intending to work out for only a few minutes.You can use various criteria to decide what’s considered a “tiny step”. Two popular ones are the 2-minute rule and the 5-minute rule, which involve committing to the specified amounts of time.Give yourself permission to make mistakesFor example, if you’re writing a paper, accept that your work won’t be perfect, especially when it comes to the first draft, and remember that you can always revise your writing afterward.This can be particularly beneficial if your procrastination is driven by perfectionism, in which case you should also make sure to set reasonable goals and standards for yourself (i.e., ones that are attainable and good enough).Make it easier to decideFor example, you can:Improve your decision-making environment (e.g., by removing distractions).Rely on your intuition.Aim to make decisions that are good enough (rather than perfect).Use a structured approach to decision-making.Eliminate weak options from your available choices.Create decision pairs, by comparing only two options at a time rather than multiple ones.Get feedback from someone else, and potentially ask them to choose for you.Use a random tool (e.g., coin flip).Doing this is especially important if you procrastinate primarily due to indecisiveness.Make it easier to take actionFor example, if you’ll need to work on a document later, you can leave it open on your computer, so it will be immediately available when you start working.Essentially, you should make it as easy as possible to start and keep doing what you should be doing, primarily by removing any friction that might hinder you.Make tasks more enjoyableFor example, if you need to clean the house, you can make this boring task more fun by listening to music while you do it, and seeing how much you can get done in a 10-minute cleaning sprint.Make it harder to procrastinateFor example, you can use the following precommitment devices:Eliminate temptations (e.g., by leaving your phone to someone else who’s in a different room).Make temptations more inconvenient (e.g., by turning off the internet on your phone).Make temptations more unpleasant (e.g., by putting a timer on your phone that makes an annoying alarm go off once your scheduled break is over).Associate negative consequences with temptations (e.g., by betting your partner that you’ll do extra chores if you touch your phone in the next hour).Delay before indulging your impulsesFor example, if you want to check your phone for notifications when you should be working, make yourself count to 10 first; if the urge to procrastinate persists after you finish counting, then you can follow through on it, but if it disappears, then you can work instead.You can count to different numbers (e.g., 5 or 20), but it’s important to actually count, and to avoid procrastinating until you’ve finished doing this.Set deadlinesFor example, if you want to write a book but keep postponing it for years, you can set a deadline to finish the first draft of the first chapter within 2 weeks.Deadlines should be:Appropriate, so they shouldn’t give you too much or too little time.Concrete, so they should specify an exact point in time.Meaningful, so they should involve an effective incentive for abiding by them (e.g., someone who will hold you accountable).You might benefit from setting intermediate deadlines, which correspond to specific steps (or proximal goals) that you need to complete along the path to your final (distal) goal. For example, if you need to write a book, you can set a deadline for finishing each chapter.You might sometimes also benefit from setting ultra-short deadlines, which are measured in seconds or minutes, for example by using a timer to give yourself 1 minute to make a decision.Deadlines can help avoid procrastination in various ways, including making tasks feel more concrete, and creating a sense of urgency. However, you should make sure that the deadlines are indeed helping you, and if they cause issues—like stress or added hurdles—then you might want to modify or avoid them.Form implementation intentionsImplementation intentions are concrete plans regarding when, where, and how you’ll pursue your goals. They primarily involve establishing if-then rules (i.e., “If X happens, then I’ll do Y”), which describe how you’ll overcome obstacles and temptations using goal-directed behavior (to support your goal intentions). Good rules are often ones that you can apply automatically (i.e., with minimal deliberation), which increases the likelihood that you’ll use them.For example, if you need to study without being distracted, you can decide that you’ll do so at the library while wearing noise-blocking headphones. You can also decide that if someone comes over and starts trying to talk, then you’ll respond by saying “sorry, we can chat later, but I really have to study right now”.Identify and address your fearsPeople often procrastinate because they’re afraid of something, like failing or being criticized.If this might be the case for you, then you should think through your situation to figure out what you’re afraid of. Then, you can use various techniques to address your fears.For example, you can use self-distancing, by considering what advice you would give to a friend if they were in your situation, or by talking to yourself using self-distanced language (e.g., “what should you do?”). Doing this can also help with other things, like creating your action plan.Increase your motivationThe following are key ways to do this:Gamify your behavior. This involves incorporating elements from games, like competition with others and the accumulation of points, into other types of activities. For example, if your New Year’s resolution is to have no zero days (on which you make no progress toward your goals), then you can give yourself a point for each day you achieve this, and get a reward after every 10 points.Create streaks. Streaks are chains of days in a row on which you achieve your goals. You should track them in a way that’s motivating and convenient. For example, you can use a dedicated app, or the Seinfeld strategy (by marking a big X in a calendar on each day you achieve your goals).Reward your accomplishments. For example, you can take a short break to watch TV for every chapter that you read in preparation for a test. You can also find ways to make your progress feel more rewarding, like going over your to-do list at the end of each day, to feel good about how much you got done.Set immediate outcomes. For example, you can eat a piece of candy as reward for every task that you complete while working on a project. That’s because the closer in time outcomes are, the more you care about them (both positive outcomes for acting on time and negative ones for procrastinating).Visualize your future self. For example, if you’re procrastinating on an assignment because its grade will only come in a few weeks, you can imagine your future self getting that grade. This mental time travel (or episodic future thinking) can improve the connection between your present and future selves (i.e., your temporal self-continuity), to make you care more about your future self, the future consequences of your actions, and the perceived value of future outcomes. The visualization can focus on positive or negative future outcomes, can take place from a first- or third-person perspective (i.e., through your own perspective or through someone else’s), and should generally be as vivid as possible.Decide whether to focus on outcomes or tasks. Sometimes, like when you need to complete an unpleasant task that will lead to a substantial reward, it may be better to have an outcome focus. Other times, like when thinking about an outcome stresses you, it may be better to have a process focus instead, by concentrating on the task instead.Reflect on the value of your outcomes. For example, write down why an outcome that you’re pursuing is important to you.Remind yourself of your goals. For example, if you want good grades in order to get into a certain college, you can put a sticker with its logo on your laptop, to remind you what you’re working toward.Associate outcomes with tasks. For example, you can write down how the task that you’re working on will clearly lead to the outcome you’re interested in.Increase your energyFor example, you can:Listen to energizing music.Take a short break (e.g., go outside to breathe some fresh air).Take a long break to ensure you get sufficient rest.Improve your lifestyle (e.g., by eating better, exercising, and getting enough sleep).Minimize unnecessary energy drains (e.g., by setting heuristics regarding the default clothes you’ll wear each day, to reduce the number of unimportant but taxing decisions you make).Doing this is especially important if you procrastinate primarily due to low energy (e.g., because exhaustion is making it hard for you to exert self-control).Improve your environmentA bad environment pushes you to procrastinate, while a good environment pushes you to act. Accordingly, the following are key ways to improve your environment:Remove distractions and temptations. For example, disconnect your phone from the internet or leave it in a different room.Make the environment more pleasant. For example, clean clutter from your desk.Eliminate bad cues. For example, move the icon of your favorite social-media app (e.g., Reddit) away from your phone’s home screen, so you won’t see it every time you open your phone.Add good cues. For example, put a sticky note on your favorite gaming platform, reminding you to finish your work before playing (this is a nudge—a small change to your environment that encourages you to act in a beneficial way).Switch to a better environment. For example, go study in the library instead of your room, to separate the area where you work from the one where you rest.Use social techniquesThese include the following:Emulate a role model. For example, if you’re procrastinating on a task because it’s hard, ask yourself what a person you admire would do if they were in your situation, or pretend this person is watching you now.Have someone hold you accountable. For example, you can ask a close friend to check on your progress once a week, or find an accountability buddy to work with.Build a social-support network. Such network is comprised of people (e.g., friends and study partners) who can help you in various ways, like providing emotional support when you face your fears.Improve your social environment. For example, avoid negative peer influence (e.g., people who glorify procrastination), and seek positive peer influence (e.g., people who care about their work).Use time-management techniquesSuch techniques include the following (in addition to others that are discussed in this guide, like setting deadlines):Use a to-do list. For example, you can write down a list of upcoming tasks in a notebook or an app.Prioritize tasks. For example, you can use the Ivy Lee Method, by writing down—at the end of each day—six tasks you want to complete tomorrow, ranked in order of importance. Similarly, you can use an Eisenhower matrix, by determining how important and how urgent your tasks are, and then using that to decide what to work on.Set reminders. For example, you can put a sticky note next to your laptop if there’s something you need to do tomorrow, or you can use an app to send you a notification when there’s a task that you need to complete soon.Alternate consistently between work and rest. For example, you can use the Pomodoro technique, by working on your tasks for 25-minute long stretches, with 5-minute breaks in between, while taking a longer 30-minute break after every 4 work sets.Schedule dedicated blocks of time in advance. For example, you can allocate 30 minutes in the afternoon to making an important decision that you’ve been postponing (a technique called timeboxing).Schedule work according to your productivity cycles. For example, if you struggle to concentrate for an hour after lunch (i.e., that’s your slump time), then try to avoid scheduling work for that time, or try to schedule less important work that you’ll be able to focus on more easily. Alternatively, if you find it easier to concentrate on creative tasks in the morning (i.e., that’s your peak time), then try to schedule such tasks for that time. When doing this, you should often aim to reach a flow state, where you’re completely immersed in the activity you’re engaged in, and are consequently highly productive and unlikely to procrastinate.Establish consistent routines. For example, have a dedicated time each day when you work on a specific type of assignment, or a dedicated day each week when you do a specific chore.Create starting ritualsFor example, you can use a countdown, by counting down from some number (e.g., 5), while telling yourself that when you reach zero you’ll do what you need to, and then prompting yourself to do so once you finish the count (or earlier). This is sometimes called the 5-second rule.Alternatively, you can use other rituals, like clapping your hands once, listening to an energizing song, or going through some routine.You can condition yourself to use these rituals through easy tasks, which will make it more likely that you’ll follow through on them with hard tasks.Start with your best or worst tasksPeople sometimes find it beneficial to start with their best (e.g., easiest or most fun) task first, for example because this increases their confidence or helps them mentally get into work mode.Conversely, people sometimes find it beneficial to start with their worst (e.g., hardest or most unpleasant) task first, for example because this helps them get it out of the way quickly while they’re fresh. This approach is also called eating the frog or eating the elephant beetle, where the animal in question signifies the worst task.A task can be considered the best/worst out of various groups of tasks (e.g., tasks in a day or in a project).Immediately complete small tasksIt can sometimes be beneficial to complete small tasks as soon as you encounter them, for example because the motivation for them is still fresh, because scheduling them will require more work than just doing them, or because this prevents them from piling up into something that feels overwhelming.You can decide what’s considered a “small” task, based on what works well for you. A popular definition is any task that takes less than 2 minutes to complete (this is known as the 2-minute rule, and is distinct from the similarly named rule about committing to a tiny first step).Deal with bottlenecksA bottleneck is a task that’s causing you to delay on other tasks, for example because you need it for bureaucratic approval or emotional closure.Bottlenecks can cause substantial issues, so you should prioritize dealing with them. In addition to doing this using general anti-procrastination techniques, you might also be able to do this by changing the situation so the task is no longer a bottleneck (e.g., by finding ways to make progress on other tasks), or by eliminating the bottleneck (e.g., by delegating it to someone else).Switch between tasksFor example, if you’re stuck on a certain task, you can switch to a different task for a while, and return to the original one when you feel “unstuck”.This can involve procrastinating productively on the original task, by doing beneficial but less important things. For example, if you should be studying for a test, you could procrastinate by doing homework instead (rather than browsing social media). You can even do this in a structured manner, by scheduling unimportant tasks that feel urgent, and then using the desire to procrastinate on them as motivation to work on your original tasks. However, be cautious about the potential issues that this can cause, like procrastinating on your most important tasks for too long.Take a breakFor example, if you just finished writing a paper, and are now procrastinating on your computer, then rather than trying to force yourself to work on your next assignment, go to take a proper break in a different room for a few minutes.This can often be the most effective choice for your long-term productivity and wellbeing, for instance if it’s crucial in order to let you clear your head and recharge mentally.Improve your emotion regulationLearning to regulate emotions better can help you avoid procrastination, primarily by improving your ability to cope with the presence of negative emotions and the absence of positive ones. This generally involves using beneficial (or adaptive) emotion-regulation techniques, like addressing your fears, rather than detrimental (or maladaptive) techniques, like ruminating over concerns.For example, one technique you can use is to acknowledge the presence of negative emotions, while reminding yourself of your mental toughness and commitment to finishing your work. Other emotion-regulation techniques you can use include inquiry-based stress reduction and mental contrasting with implementation intentions.Develop self-efficacySelf-efficacy is your belief in your ability to perform the actions needed to achieve your goals, which is important in order to avoid procrastinating. You can increase your self-efficacy using various techniques, like reflecting on your successes, and identifying strategies you can use to achieve your goals.Develop self-compassionSelf-compassion involves extending sympathy to yourself, particularly when you struggle or suffer. To increase your self-compassion, you can:Remind yourself that everyone struggles and makes mistakes.Forgive yourself for past procrastination.Remind yourself that messing up doesn’t mean that you’ll never change.Think about how you would help a friend in a similar situation.Practice mindfulness (by paying attention to yourself and your environment as they are in the present moment, while accepting your thoughts and emotions in a non-reactive and non-judgmental manner).Treat underlying conditionsIf your procrastination is caused (even partially) by conditions like ADHD or depression, try to those conditions, using professional help (e.g., a therapist) if necessary.Closing wordsThis guide gave you the main tools you need to stop procrastinating; now, it’s up to you to use them.If you already know what you need to do next based on what you’ve read, do that.If you’re unsure where to start, do the following:Write down a specific and realistic goal relating to something you’ve been procrastinating on.Write down how, where, when, and why you’ve been procrastinating on it.Pick 1–3 anti-procrastination techniques that look like they might be relevant (if you’re unsure, go with breaking tasks into manageable steps, committing to a tiny first step, and making it harder to procrastinate).Start implementing these techniques.Remember that you don’t need to get it perfect; for now, the important thing is to just get started. Later, you can refine your approach, for example by adding goals and techniques.The longer you wait, the less likely you are to act on what you’ve learned, so start now, instead of telling yourself you’ll do it later. Life coach Wendy Lynne says to start by identifying the root cause of your procrastination. Usually, it stems from fear or anxiety. Once you address whatever is holding you back emotionally, it will be easier to move ahead with your task. Set goals and break up your task into smaller pieces so it's less overwhelming. Make a record of all the tasks you need to accomplish.[1] Include short-term tasks you need to finish daily and weekly and long-term goals that may take months or years to accomplish. Seeing everything written down can help you plan out what needs to be done to meet your goals.[2] Write this list on paper or in your phone—do whatever’s best for you! Advertisement Set a timer and work on a task for a designated amount of time. Instead of thinking about the total number of hours you’re about to work for, just start. Tell yourself you’ve only got to do it for 15 minutes. This will deal with the intimidation factor, and you’ll likely spend much longer than 15 minutes on your task before you stop working again.[3] If 15 minutes still sounds too intimidating, start with 3 or 5 minutes to warm yourself up. Once the timer goes off, take a 2-minute break. Then, start up on another set of 15 minutes of work. Tackle things one step at a time so you don't get overwhelmed. It can be overwhelming to think about finishing a whole essay or completing a week’s worth of tasks. Instead of thinking about everything you must do, like one big obstacle, break it down into tiny pieces.[4] You'll be able to get started on the smallest crumb and go forward from there.[5] For example, instead of thinking, “I need to finish this essay before 10 PM tonight,” tell yourself, “I’m going to make a short outline, fill that in, and then look for quotes.” Consider trying a specific technique like Pomodoro, in which you work from 25-minute chunks and take 5-minute breaks in between. Avoid making a long, disorganized to-do list. This is just setting yourself up for failure. Instead, create subcategories like "Home," "Work," "Family," and "Fun" and try to cross off a few entries from each list every day. Similarly, avoid multitasking or working on more than 1 task at once, as this could make you feel overwhelmed or stressed. Advertisement Make a plan in the morning and pick the hardest task first. You’ll be most energized in the morning once you’ve eaten breakfast and woken up fully. Tackle the hardest thing on your docket right then. You’ll feel better once it’s done, and then you can move on to a few easier tasks for the rest of the day.[6] Keep in mind that this strategy isn’t for everyone, so stick to tackling your most difficult tasks whenever you feel the most motivated. For instance, if you're a morning person, do your toughest work right after you wake up. On the other hand, if you tend to be groggy in the morning, you risk making careless errors or frustration by going headfirst into a difficult task. Try using a strategy like the Eisenhower Box for prioritizing your tasks. Categorize all you have to do into 4 categories: tasks that must be done immediately, tasks that can be delegated to someone else, and tasks that aren't important and can be eliminated. The strength of this strategy is that it works well with the tasks you must complete in a given day but also on longer timescales, like weeks or months.[7] Use a planner to help schedule your time and stay motivated. Advertisement Help motivate yourself with a distraction-free environment. Where you do your work or task can play a big part in how motivated you feel. For instance, if you’re studying for a test, pick a study space with limited foot traffic and plenty of space to lay out your textbooks.[8] For some, being in a new environment helps motivate them to work. Try bringing your work or task to a local library, coffee shop, or bookstore to feel inspired. Stay focused by eliminating your ability to waste time online.[9] If you're working on your cellphone or computer, it can be tempting to open up other apps or browsers instead of working on the task. Thankfully, there are plenty of apps out there to help block this urge! For smartphones, try these apps:[10] AppDetox uses blockage rules that only let you use selected apps for a set amount of time. Forest grows trees for however long you stay focused. For laptops and computers, try these browser extensions:[11] Freedom blocks distractions on all your devices at once. Self-Control blocks a list of websites for set amounts of time. Cold Turkey Blocker schedules system-wide blocking. Reader Poll: We asked 186 wikiHow readers if social media distracts them from things they’d rather be doing with their time, and 85% of them said yes. [Take Poll] Advertisement Keep your phone out of reach if it’s distracting you. If you can't handle being in the same space as something that’s going to tempt you, address that problem by keeping it in another room or turning it off. This also goes for other devices, including iPads, Kindles, or computers.[12] If you need to keep your phone on for family or work-related reasons, turn off all your notifications except for texts and/or calls. Instrumental music can help boost your productivity. Many people struggle to work and stay focused in a completely silent room, but listening to popular songs could have you singing along rather than completing your task. So, opt for white noise, nature sounds, or instrumental music to help you stay on task.[13] Advertisement Motivate yourself to finish a task with something you love. Tell yourself that when you complete your to-do list, you’ll get to celebrate with one of your favorite things. This anticipation can be used to push yourself through the pain.[14] Try rewarding yourself with a meal at your favorite restaurant, seeing a movie with a friend, or buying yourself something you’ve always wanted. Be careful not to over-reward yourself. Stick with small end-of-the-day rewards, and save big celebrations for when you accomplish something tremendous. “Self-talking” is a great way to calm yourself down and get focused. Using positive self-talk can even help you meet your goals. Talk to yourself, using your name. Tell yourself that you can (and will) do this.[15] Self-talk by saying something like, “Dariel, I know this week has been hard, and you’re tired. You’ve written a million essays before, and you’ll rock this.”[16] You can also ask yourself questions: “Amari, why are you nervous about this? You know you can handle it.” Self-talk out loud if you can. It’ll also work in your head if you’re in a public place. Advertisement The more stressed you are, the harder it’ll be to get your work done. Do your best to avoid getting angry with yourself. Guilt and regret are draining emotions and can easily leave you feeling tired and frustrated rather than motivated. Instead, focus on the task at hand and set your emotions aside.[17] Imagining the perfect outcome could be holding you back. Believe it or not, procrastination can stem from perfectionism. Break your procrastination habit by aiming to finish a task or project rather than perfecting it. Remember, you can always go back later and iron out the kinks. But for now, focus on getting the task done.[18] Advertisement Staying on task and completing your goals doesn’t have to be a solo endeavor. It can be hard to stay away from distractions when you’re doing it alone. Ask a friend or family member if they’d be willing to check in on your work habits and accomplishments. This way, they can help set you back on track if they notice you’re distracted or falling behind.[19] Try planning fun outings with each other to reward yourself for meeting your goals. Hold accountability meetings each week or month to catch each other up on whether or not you’re meeting your goals and deadlines. Add New Question Question What is the main cause of procrastination? Sharon Lee Success Strategist Sharon Lee is a Success Strategist and the Owner of Fearless Pursuits. With over seven years of experience, she specializes in helping others gain clarity on their goals, build confidence, and remain accountable towards their goals. Sharon offers advice to others through life coaching, career coaching, and small business coaching. Sharon holds a Strategic Intervention Coach Certification from Robbins-Madanes Training and has additional training from Erickson Coaching International. Procrastination comes out of the obstacles that you fear. If your pain for going through a certain process is greater than the ultimate pleasure you'll get out of it, you won't end up doing it. Question How can I stop procrastinating if I have trouble with distractions? Trudi Griffin, LPC, MS Professional Counselor Trudi Griffin is a Licensed Professional Counselor based in Wisconsin. She specializes in addictions, mental health problems, and trauma recovery. She has worked as a counselor in both community health settings and private practice. She also works as a writer and researcher, with education, experience, and compassion for people informing her research and writing subjects. She received Bachelor’s degrees in Communications and Psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. She also earned an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Marquette University. Some of the techniques above will help, such as doing your work in environments without distractions and using timers to hyperfocus for 20 minutes at a time. Question How can I stop procrastinating when I am always stressed and tired? Trudi Griffin, LPC, MS Professional Counselor Trudi Griffin is a Licensed Professional Counselor based in Wisconsin. She specializes in addictions, mental health problems, and trauma recovery. She has worked as a counselor in both community health settings and private practice. She also works as a writer and researcher, with education, experience, and compassion for people informing her research and writing subjects. She received Bachelor’s degrees in Communications and Psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay. She also earned an MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Marquette University. Identifying and fixing the source of stress may be the first thing you need to do to help the procrastination. Ask a Question Advertisement Thanks The advice in this section is based on the lived experiences of wikiHow readers like you. If you have a helpful tip you’d like to share on wikiHow, please submit it in the field below. Turn off the Wi-Fi on your devices and do any work that doesn't involve the internet first. That will help you eliminate the internet and social media as a distraction. Make it a game by racing yourself. For example, if you have to clean your room, set a timer for 10 minutes. During that time, try to get as much done as possible. Each day, choose 3 important tasks that you need to do. Reward yourself in some way once you've done those things. It will help motivate you to get more done. Advertisement This article was co-authored by Wendy Lynne and by wikiHow staff writer, Aly Rusciano. Wendy Lynne is a life and relationship coach based in Redmond, WA. In 2009, Wendy founded Wendy Lynne Coaching to help individuals break free from fear and limiting beliefs to live a fulfilling and happy life. With experience in relationship, career, health, and life coaching, Wendy was named a top coach by coachfoundation.com. She was trained by Martha Beck as a Life Coach and by The Life Coach School as a Master Life Coach. She is an Internal Family Systems Therapist and received advanced training in relationship coaching from the Hendricks Institute. Wendy also graduated from UCLA with a BA in Sociology and has previous experience as a Managing Director at the Mental Toughness Academy. This article has been viewed 2,087,503 times. Co-authors: 193 Updated: May 16, 2025 Views: 2,087,503 Categories: Productivity Print Send fan mail to authors Thanks to all authors for creating a page that has been read 2,087,503 times. "It gave me ideas on how to actually get on with the work and keep from putting myself off. I keep looking at it as the mountainous heap it is instead of breaking it down to bite-sized chunks. Also doing something for a set period of time, then breaking off for a bit. That helps with the discipline. "..." more Share your story Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. 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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Whether procrastination prevents you from achieving your goals, stresses you out, or hurts you in another way, it can be a painful problem.Solving Procrastination will help you understand why you procrastinate and how to stop, using research-based insights that are clear and concise.This will help you do the things you’ve been postponing for too long, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive.What do you want to learn first about procrastination? Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. What would your life be like without procrastination? Likely, you’d be happier, wealthier, and healthier. It’s time to act. When you procrastinate, you waste time that could be invested into something meaningful, instead. If you can overcome this fierce enemy, you will accomplish more personally and professionally. Get the best out of your life. Don’t procrastinate on happiness, leadership or sales skills, or even your ability to think critically. Procrastination is the act of unnecessarily postponing decisions or actions. For example, if someone postpones an assignment until right before its deadline, despite the fact that they intended to work on it earlier, that person is procrastinating.This article contains a collection of interesting and useful statistics about procrastination, which will help you understand who is affected by procrastination, how they are affected by it, and why they are affected by it in the first place.As you will see, these statistics are all based on credible sources, and specifically on peer-reviewed research articles that are linked directly in the text. Nevertheless, keep in mind that any given statistic is influenced by various factors, such as the sample and methods that were used to calculate it, so these statistics should be interpreted and applied with caution.Statistics about the prevalence of procrastinationStudies show that around 20% of adults procrastinate chronically.Studies show that around 50% of college students procrastinate in a consistent and chronic manner, 75% consider themselves to be procrastinators, and 80%–95% of college students procrastinate.In a study on an adult sample, 74% of the people who were surveyed indicated that they go to bed later than they planned at least once a week, with no external reason for doing so.In addition, a 2001 study on a mixed sample (mean age = 29.4, standard deviation 12.0, 51.9% students, 42.5% employed, 3.6% unemployed), found the following:Approximately half (50.7%) of the people who were surveyed reported frequently using the internet to procrastinate.Across all participants, people spent on average almost half (47%) of their time online procrastinating, amounting to an average of 1.59 hours of internet procrastination each day, though there was substantial variability in this across individuals, meaning that many people procrastinated to a much greater or lower degree than average.When it comes to procrastinating using the internet in specific domains, people procrastinated the most when they were home (57% of the time, amounting to 1.12 hours on average out of 1.96 hours spent on the internet), then at school (40% of the time, amounting to 0.26 hours out of 0.65), and finally at work (32% of the time, amounting to 0.24 hours out of 0.75).Furthermore, given that digital devices and the internet now play a much more substantial role in most people’s lives (in all domains), and given that general procrastination rates appear to be increasing rather than decreasing, it’s likely that people now spend much more time per day procrastinating on the internet than they did in the past.Finally, note that the prevalence of procrastination also varies based on the task involved. For example, a study on students in an introductory psychology course indicated that ~46% of them always or nearly always procrastinate on writing term papers, ~30% procrastinate on reading weekly assignments, ~28% procrastinate on studying for exams, ~23% procrastinate on administrative tasks, and ~10% procrastinate on school activities in general.Statistics about the dangers of procrastinationIn one survey, 94% of people indicated that procrastination has a negative effect on their happiness, and 18% indicated that this effect is extremely negative.When students were asked how they felt after procrastinating, over 80% of their responses were categorized as negative.In a study on students, many said that procrastination was always or nearly always a problem for them when it comes to various academic activities (e.g., ~24% said this about writing term papers and doing weekly readings, and ~21% said this about studying for exams). Furthermore, in this study, many students said that they wanted or definitely wanted to reduce their procrastination on writing term papers (~65%), studying for exams (~62%), and doing weekly readings (~55%).Students often report that procrastination occupies over a third of their daily activities, usually in the form of behaviors such as sleeping, watching TV, or playing video games.A meta-analysis found that procrastination is negatively correlated with various aspects of academic performance, including performance on assignments (correlation of -.21, across 13 studies), performance in final exams (-.17, across 11 studies), grade point average—GPA (-.16, across 19 studies), and overall academic performance (-.19, across 41 studies).An increase of a single point on a 5-point scale measuring the tendency to procrastinate is associated with approximately a $15,000 drop in salary (in ~2013 dollars), according to a large-scale study.When splitting the population into two groups based on how much they engage in procrastination, procrastinators comprise 57% of the unemployed, according to a large-scale study.Employees spend on average over a quarter of their workdays procrastinating, which can cost employers over $10,000 per employee per year (in ~2011 dollars), according to a book on the topic.Statistics about the causes of procrastinationThere is a strong positive correlation (.64) between procrastination and agreement with the statement “No matter how much I try, I still put things off”, which suggests that procrastination is often involuntary.One meta-analysis examined studies that compared procrastination with self-reported work intentions, and found that the two variables are largely independent (a correlation of -.03 with a 95% confidence interval of [-.13, .08], across 8 studies), which means that procrastinators often intend to work as hard as non-procrastinators, or even harder.A meta-analysis found that procrastination is positively correlated with a disparity between intended work habits and actual work habits, a phenomenon referred to as the intention-action gap, which means that procrastinators often work less than they intend to (a correlation of .29 across 6 studies). The meta-analysis notes that this gap generally grows as the amount of time between the intention and the action grows, meaning that it tends to be greater for actions that are far in the future. At the same time, this gap tends to narrow as the deadline for an intended action approaches, and it may even reverse, meaning that procrastinators often end up doing more work than they originally intended when finishing tasks right before the deadline.In one study, approximately 50% of people stated that their procrastination was due to some task characteristic, and two common task characteristics that lead to procrastination are task aversiveness (e.g. a task being perceived as boring or unpleasant), and timing of rewards and punishments (e.g. a task having rewards or punishments that are far in the future).In one study, 8% of people stated that low-confidence was a cause of procrastination.A meta-analysis found that there is a negative correlation (-.38, across 39 studies) between procrastination and self-efficacy, which is a person’s belief in their ability to perform the actions needed to achieve their goals. The meta-analysis also found a similar but weaker correlation (-.27, across 33 studies) between procrastination and self-esteem.A meta-analysis found a positive correlation between procrastination and depression (.28 across 56 studies).Studies suggest that tiredness is one of the top three reasons that students give for putting off work, with approximately 28% of students indicating “Didn’t have enough energy to begin the task” as a source of procrastination.A meta-analysis showed that different facets of perfectionism have different effects on procrastination. Specifically, perfectionistic concerns, which are characterized by excessive preoccupation with other people’s opinion, negative self-evaluations, and an inability to experience satisfaction even after a successful performance, are positively correlated with procrastination (a correlation of .23, across 43 studies). Conversely, procrastination strivings, which are characterized by the tendency to set excessively high personal standards and demand perfection from oneself, are negatively correlated with procrastination (a correlation of −.22, across 38 studies).People sometimes procrastinate due to an underlying fear of failure. For example, in two studies that used an open-ended questionnaire, 7%–16% of people gave fear of failure as a reason for procrastination, and a meta-analysis found a positive correlation of .18 between fear of failure and procrastination (across 57 studies).One study found that rebellion and resentment are common causes of procrastination among middle-school students, with 26% of them highly indicating that they resented people setting deadlines for them, but another study found that this was a relatively rare cause of procrastination among college students, with fewer than 5% of students indicating this.Sensation seeking is sometimes a cause for procrastination. For example, in one study, 6.4% of students responded positively to the notion that they “Looked forward to the excitement of doing this task at the last minute”. Furthermore, a meta-analysis found a positive correlation of .17 between procrastination and sensation seeking (across 11 studies).For more information about why people procrastinate, see the dedicated article on the topic.Statistics about the genetics of procrastinationA longitudinal study on twins found the following:Procrastination is moderately herit