

Overcoming Procrastination

Do you have the characteristics of a person who procrastinates?

- I feel busy and rushed in life.
- I am concerned with my final output rather than the process of completing work.
- Even though I worry about my final output, I can't seem to get to work on the most essential activities needed to complete an assignment.
- I am concerned with, sometimes even anxious about, what others think of my work and me.
- I believe I have to write when I'm inspired and study when I'm in the mood.
- I don't plan concretely for when and how I will complete an assignment.
- I don't deal with time well: I have a whole week to complete a task, but the week gets away from me.
- I feel annoyed by the pressure to be orderly and on time.
- I work in binges, putting in two hours or more per work session, but then I have difficulty doing much the next day.
- I don't seek information or feedback from peers and superiors very frequently.
- I spend less time on socializing, recreation, and rest than I would like.

Basic Principles for Working Effectively

- Slow down! It's ironic, but it works. Think about what you are about to do and plan for the most efficient way to accomplish the task.
- Set small goals for yourself: Large goals that are simply unattainable will most likely lead to quick failure and frustration on your part.
- Once small goals are achieved, think about setting larger goals. Goal setting is an ongoing process of setting goals, analyzing success and failure, and using this learning to set new goals
- Work in brief, daily sessions lasting one-half hour to ninety minutes.
- Begin before you feel ready: you may never "feel ready" to do a task, especially a task you are not motivated to do. Diving into the task may surprise you that it is easier than you had anticipated.
- Stop! After a reasonable amount of time, put the work aside whether or not it is finished and plan for when you will pick it up again: when you will start and on what you will work.
- When writing, balance preliminaries such as collecting material, research, organizing and conceptual outlining with actual writing.

Adapted from: Kornhauser, A. (1993). *How to Study*,(University of Chicago Press;
Pauk, W. (2013). *How to Study in College* (11th Ed.), Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin;
Reynolds, J.A. (1996) *College Success: Study Strategies and Skills*, Boston, MA, Allyn & Bacon.

- Talk back to self-defeating thinking and habits, this may include speaking to a therapist at SCS to assist you in addressing thoughts that are blocking you from being the student you want to be.
- Manage your emotions: work in a relaxed mood at a moderate pace, also SCS therapist may be beneficial to help manage your mood.
- Moderate attachment and reactions to your work (procrastinators tend to become attached to their ideas quickly.) Think of your work as a work in progress. Give yourself time to let ideas germinate rather than drawing conclusions too early.
- Let others, even critics, do some of the work.
- Limit wasted effort: for example, if you sit down to work and find yourself distracted, stop and take care of whatever is bothering you, and then going back to the work when you are most focused.

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