

Procrastination Solutions

The following strategies can help you complete your assignment on time and lower your stress levels.

Ask for Directions

Sometimes procrastination comes from not knowing how to proceed with an assignment. If you're unsure about where to begin, carefully read over the assignment instructions and don't be afraid to ask for help: from the instructor during office hours, from the Learning Commons services, from fellow students, by taking a workshop on how to write academic papers, etc. Then, identify a manageable first step, schedule time to follow through on it, and learn as you go.

Break the Task Down

People often procrastinate when they feel overwhelmed by a large task. Remember that you don't have to write the whole paper all at once, you just have to get started and then complete the assignment, bit by bit. Break the assignment down into manageable tasks or phases, put these on a "To-Do List", schedule time to work on the assignment, then focus on completing one task at a time. Continue to break larger tasks down and adjust your plan, as you cross things off your "To-Do List" and move on to subsequent tasks.

Follow the 15 Minute Rule

Start with a task that won't take longer than about 15 minutes to complete. No matter how much work we have to do, most of us can talk ourselves into doing something for 15 minutes, even if we don't really want to. Completing a short task will motivate you to tackle the next task and get you into a productive mood. As possible ways to get started, look back to your "To-Do List" for tasks that that can be done in a short period.

Don't Get Trapped by Perfectionism

Often procrastination comes from expecting too much of ourselves all at once. If perfectionism is an issue for you, remind yourself that drafts can be fine-tuned later. It's typically easier to revise than to start from scratch, and handing something in is usually better than missing deadlines.

Stay Motivated

Reconnecting with your personal interests and your motivation for taking this course can be very helpful for overcoming procrastination. Consider how this assignment does, or could be made to, connect to your goals. Remembering that you value these goals and have chosen them for yourself can help motivate you to stay on task.

Establish Productive Routines

We all have routines, so establish ones that foster productivity. Find a suitable study environment, where distractions are minimized. Establish a reasonable schedule for working on your assignment during times of the day when you are usually most productive. Maintain balance in your life to keep you rested and healthy even during your busiest times. Recognize what has worked best for you in the past and build that into your working routine.