Doing Something About Procrastination – NOW!

Procrastinating is when you keep putting things off that you really need to do now. Some students have trouble with their studies because they have a habit of procrastinating: not getting round to studying for an exam or working on an assignment until the last possible moment, or even later.

If you have developed a habit of procrastinating with your studies you really do need to do something about it—NOW. Below are some practical suggestions to deal with procrastination.

1. Each day make a short list of the things that have to be done today. Do not spend more than 5 minutes making the list. The idea is to be clear what you have to do, not to spend so much time making lists that there is no room to do the things on the list.

2. When you start a task, finish it and cross it off the list.

3. Get momentum going. Do SOME work every day: if you studied for only ONE HOUR a day then at the end of the week you will have done a full day’s worth of study! If an hour a day will not happen, then try tricking or “conning” yourself. Tell yourself that you will only study for 10 minutes. Once you have started you will often find that you want to keep going.

4. When you have a thought about something that has to be done, jot it down straight away in your Student Diary. The moment you can, follow this up and do something.

5. Procrastination often centres around where you study. Get your study space organised so you don’t put off actually working because you spend forever getting ready to work. Get everything you need and dump it all on your study desk BEFORE you sit down. That way you are less likely to keep avoiding work by jumping up to go and get something you think you need every few minutes.

6. Turn the study chore into a scientific experiment: find out by trying it out—what music in the background motivates study? What lighting is best? Does Aromatherapy work for you?—try citrus, basil, clary sage, or anything else that seems good.

7. It is better to do something than nothing. Some students create a problem for themselves by (a) worrying about not doing a particular assignment, and (b) because of this worry not working on anything else. So, if the choice is doing nothing versus working on something less urgent but more enjoyable, do the enjoyable task rather than do nothing.

8. When you do complete something, give yourself a reward: you can use a chocolate bar if this works for you!

9. Here is a weird one…DO NOT finish what you are working on when you take a break or finish for the day! It is often easier to get going on something you have yet to finish than it is to start on something new! When you do finish the task you will probably find it easy to go onto a new one.

10. Sometimes, procrastination results from a fear of failure, especially with assignments. Some students fear getting a poor mark. They are paralysed by this and cannot get started. At the last moment, their anxiety about not having done the assignment overcome the fear of failure and they put in an enormous effort to get it done and in. The work is usually not as good as it could be and the student is left exhausted and less motivated than ever. If you are in this cycle, break it. Talk to one of the Counsellors on your campus about studying smarter not harder.

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