



Writing Centre

Twelve Tips to Beat Procrastination

- 1. Perceive procrastination's pointlessness.** You must complete your assignment at some point, so why not start now?
- 2. Set a deadline.** Many people find it easier to get things done when working under a deadline. Another way is to ask a friend to keep you accountable: *If I don't finish this paper by the 15th, I'll buy you lunch!*
- 3. Break it down.** A big project can be overwhelming. Divide it into smaller tasks with their own deadlines.
- 4. Do the most difficult tasks first.** If there is a course that you do not enjoy or find challenging, complete that work first. Getting challenging jobs out of the way leaves you free to work on more enjoyable tasks.
- 5. Work smarter, not harder.** Find the times and places that *you* can be the most productive. Do you work best in the morning, or at night? Find or create a dedicated study spot, and build a mental association with studying there, instead of trying to study in a place your brain associates with sleep or entertainment.
- 6. Cut the clutter.** Some students find it easier to work with some background noise, and others feel stressed when they are disconnected from social networks for too long. Satisfy your need for noise by using a white noise playlist or working somewhere with crowd sounds. Separate your work into sections, and commit to leaving your phone alone until your next break.
- 7. Address your weaknesses.** What tasks do you find most difficult? Your weaknesses can make the work harder to complete. Fix this by finding someone who can help you improve your skills, or look up some resources online.
- 8. Spend your breaks wisely.** Limit your break by setting a timer and commit to getting back to work when the alarm goes off. Spend your breaks doing an activity that energizes you and refreshes your mind, such as exercise.
- 9. Put it into a visual.** If homework and deadlines seem overwhelming, write them on a calendar. Keeping track of tasks makes them feel more achievable, and helps relieve the stress of having deadlines and projects floating around in your head. Electronic calendars can give you reminders!
- 10. Know what distracts you.** Do you *have* to answer your phone whenever it beeps? Put it out of sight and in silent mode while you're working. You can check it on a break. Do you end up surfing the Internet when you are supposed to be writing a paper? If you do, turn off your computer's Wi-Fi.
- 11. Reward yourself.** Every time you accomplish a task or reach a goal, give yourself a small reward! For bigger accomplishments, treat yourself to a big reward.
- 12. Try the "five-minute technique".** Often, we won't start a task because it seems too large to tackle. Tell yourself that you are going to work on it for just *five minutes*. If you want to continue after that, great! If not, stop, take a short (5-10 minute) break and try again. The theory is that it is easier to continue to work than to start. If the task still seems too large, break it down into smaller steps and take breaks between each step.