

Tips for overcoming academic procrastination

1. Recognize your reasons for putting a task off and question them. This usually reveals that they're not facts and in fact, that they're often excuses. Use the 'But... rebuttal' technique.
2. Write a list of the things you have to do, including deadlines.
3. Set priorities among the various tasks you have to do by asking yourself "What is the most urgent and important of these tasks?"
4. Set goals relating to these priorities – goals make it easier to get to work, because you'll know what you're working towards. Your goals should be:
 - i. small (break down big projects into more manageable tasks); and
 - ii. clear and precise
 - a) what needs to be done? (e.g. in which subject, which assignment, which part, etc.)
 - b) how long will you work on this task?
 - c) when will you complete it by?
5. Establish set study times if you're easily distracted by more appealing offers. Act as if those times are like paid work so you have to say no to distractions. Otherwise, if you get an invitation, adopt the policy of taking a few minutes to think about how it fits with your obligations before deciding. Don't go over your planned time – you might create unrealistic expectations of yourself at your next work session.
6. Give yourself some external pressure by telling a friend about your work plan and planning to show him/her the results on a certain day.
7. Choose the best time of day for you to work and an environment that helps you to focus (for some, being at home means too many distractions, for others, the library may be too quiet).
8. Don't wait to have long periods of time available – they often never come. Use small pockets of time to work on small goals or parts of goals. This is particularly useful if the task at hand doesn't interest you so you only have to put up with it for short periods of time before moving on to something else.
9. If starting a task or project is difficult for you, choose to take the first step by having a "kick off task" that gets your momentum going. For instance, this could be clearing off your desk so you only have the necessities on hand, sharpening your pencil, or creating the cover page or table of contents of your assignment.
10. Be patient with yourself. Expect that you will have setbacks and keep applying your new strategies.
11. Reward yourself when you achieve your goals!