

# THOUGHTS & MOTIVATION



## Procrastination & Getting Things Done

If you've found yourself putting off important tasks over and over again, you're not alone. Most of us procrastinate to some degree, but some people are chronically affected by procrastination, which stops them from achieving their full potential. The key to controlling this disruptive habit is recognizing when you start to procrastinate, understand why it happens, and take active steps to better manage your time and outcomes.



### Why Do We Procrastinate?

In a nutshell, you procrastinate when you put off doing something that you should be focusing on right now, usually in favour of a task that is more enjoyable or that you're more comfortable with. People who procrastinate work just as many hours as others (and often longer hours), but they invest their time in the wrong tasks. Sometimes this is simply because they don't understand the difference between urgent tasks and important tasks, and jump right into completing urgent tasks that aren't actually important. They may feel that they are doing the right thing by reacting quickly, or they may not even think about their approach and be driven by the person whose demands are the loudest.

Another common reason for procrastinating is feeling overwhelmed by the task. Perhaps you don't know where to start or you doubt that you have the skills or resources you need. As a result, you seek comfort in doing tasks that you know you can do. Perfectionism, poor organizational skills, and underdeveloped decision-making skills can also lead to procrastination.

### How to Overcome Procrastination and Get Things Done!

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#### Recognize your procrastination

Be honest with yourself. You likely already know that you're procrastinating, but to be sure, you first need to ensure that you understand your priorities. Putting off an unimportant task isn't procrastinating – it's good prioritization!

Here are some useful indicators that will help you identify that you're starting to procrastinate:

- Filling your day with low-priority tasks on your to-do list
- Reviewing an email or task on your list more than once without starting on it
- Sitting down to start a high-priority task and almost immediately jumping to an unimportant task (e.g. getting up for coffee or checking e-mail)
- Leaving a task on your to-do list for a long time even though you know it's important
- Regularly saying "yes" to unimportant tasks others ask you to do and spending time on these rather than the important tasks on your list.

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## Focus on the Why.

Why you procrastinate can depend on both you and the task. It's important to understand the reasons for procrastination for each situation so that you can select the best approach for overcoming your reluctance to tackle the task. Generally, there are two main reasons: you find the task unpleasant, or you find the task overwhelming.

There is a second "why" that you should also focus on: why you have the task on your list to begin with. Procrastinators tend to focus on short-term gains as opposed to long-term results, so it may be helpful to remind yourself of the benefits that will result from completing the task you've been avoiding. For instance, if you've been putting off cleaning out your garage, consider the feeling you'll have when you walk into a decluttered space, or the money you can make from selling items you no longer need or feeling good about donating items.

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## Get it done!

If you're avoiding a task because you just don't want to do it, and you really can't delegate the work to someone else, you need to find ways to motivate yourself to face it. Here are a few tips to help you stop putting it off:

- Get your calendar out and schedule when you are going to work on it. When it's time to do it, set a timer to help you focus for the entire allotted time.
- Decide how you will reward yourself if – and only if! – you complete the task. It doesn't have to be an elaborate reward. Simply commit to finishing your task BEFORE you check social media, watch tv, or break for lunch.
- Find a partner to help you be accountable to the deadline you've set for yourself. For tasks that take longer, connect with your partner at certain intervals (such as once per week) and commit to what you will do before your next meeting.

If you're putting off a task because you find it overwhelming, you need a different approach.

- Be kind to yourself and don't beat yourself up for past procrastination. Research shows that doing so helps you stop putting off working on a task.
- Be realistic with your schedule and timing to set yourself up for success. If you're not a morning person, don't expect yourself to get up early to get something done. Work with your strengths and use them to your advantage.
- Break the project into smaller, more manageable tasks. Being able to recognize accomplishments along the way to finishing the entire task will help empower you and motivate you to continue.
- Start with some quick, small tasks if you can – even if they aren't the logical first steps. You'll feel better about achieving something and it will start the momentum. Getting a few easier "wins" may help you feel better about the project – maybe it won't be so overwhelming after all!



Sources [www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/better-perfect/201703/11-ways-overcome-procrastination](http://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/better-perfect/201703/11-ways-overcome-procrastination) | Images from Freepik.com