

## ***Coping with College Series***

### ***Preventing Procrastination***

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"Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried." –(author unknown)  
Procrastination can be a tragic flaw for many students. Despite being intelligent, talented, and fully capable, some students find themselves seemingly unable to complete tasks without waiting to the absolute last minute. Are you a perpetual procrastinator? There are a number of things that you can do to prevent the potentially destructive problem of procrastination.

Identify when and where you procrastinate. Do you procrastinate during finals, while working on projects, or all year long? Anticipate those times that are most difficult for you and take steps to actively prevent your procrastination. Under what circumstances are you most likely to procrastinate? If you find that you can't work when your friends come and visit, ask them to postpone their visit until after you have finished your work. What are the things that you find most distracting while trying to work? Remove things from your workspace that you find distracting (e.g., video games, telephones, lava lamps, etc.).

Are there other reasons for putting things off? Poor time management, avoidance, fear of failure, and perfectionism can all lead to procrastination. If you are having difficulty managing your time, you may find it useful to record the time you spend doing activities during the week. Are there some activities you could cut back or reschedule to be more efficient? Prioritize your activities to make time for those things that you have been putting off.

Sometimes projects seem so large that they seem to be overwhelming. When we feel overwhelmed by a project, it is often tempting to avoid it all together. Don't bite off more than you can chew; you might choke. Break projects down into smaller, more manageable (bite-size) tasks. If you can successfully meet manageable sub-goals that bring you closer towards finishing your project, you may find yourself feeling inspired and more motivated to work. One does not need to be highly motivated to engage in a given behavior. Often motivation follows behavior. Add to your motivation by rewarding your productive non-procrastinating behavior.

If you fear failure, consider this: the only sure-fire way to fail at something is to never begin at all. If you make a mistake along the way, learn from your mistakes rather than ruminate on them. Perfectionism can increase the fear of failure. Viewing accomplishments that fall short of perfection as "failures" is seldom helpful. Placing unrealistic and undue pressure on yourself to reach superhuman ideals will increase your anxiety and set yourself up for negative

outcomes. Objectively evaluate your personal standards. Can they be achieved? Are they so difficult that you find yourself feeling distressed and overwhelmed? Revise your personal expectations and set more realistic and achievable goals. This will increase your likelihood for success and decrease the anxiety that may be contributing to your procrastination.