

Procrastination: Causes and Cures

Causes

- **Fear of Success or Failure:** Some students worry so much about producing a perfect product that they wait until every drop of research has been done or every avenue explored. Others engage in elaborate preparatory or avoidance activities before beginning a task, such as deciding that all the dishes must be washed and put away before you start your paper.
- **Overestimating the time left to complete a task:** When your teacher assigns a research project the first week of school do you begin on it right away or wait? Many students think they have plenty of time, but fail to take into account the pile of other homework and life tasks they must manage during the semester.
- **Underestimating the time required to complete tasks:** Many students don't have a realistic concept of how much time it will take to look up sources, take notes, extract the information and formulate a paper. People with a poor concept of time also think they can drive a 30 minute trip in ten minutes.
- **Believing that they must be in the mood to do a task:** Delaying the start of a task until you are in the mood is a favorite among many students.
- **Over-reliance on time-saving modern technology:** If you've ever seen a procrastinator kick and scream at a copy machine or printer that's moving slower than they wish, you know what I mean.

Cures

- **Change your flawed thinking to positive, realistic thinking:** You can't wait until you're in the mood to finish important tasks; you must use positive self-talk to get yourself motivated.
- **Set SMART goals:**
Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timely
- **Prioritize and divide your tasks:** Have you ever tried to consume a steak in one bite? Probably not. Neither should you expect to finish an academic project in one step. Put all your assignment due dates on a semester calendar along with test dates. Determine how many parts each assignment will take and work on one piece at a time.
- **Organize your work area and tools before you begin:** Resist the urge to clean your work space at this time-- that's just another procrastination tactic.
- **Use a semester calendar & reminders to help you complete important tasks.**
- **Reward yourself when you finish on time.**

Source: University of Texas
at San Antonio