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Solutions

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Getting Past Procrastination

Who hasn't used the ancient method of "time management" known as never doing today what you can put off until tomorrow? But procrastination doesn't feel good. When an unfinished chore is hanging over your head, it's like living under your own personal cloud.

Procrastination Warning Signs

Don't let procrastination sneak up on you!
Recognize the warning signs.

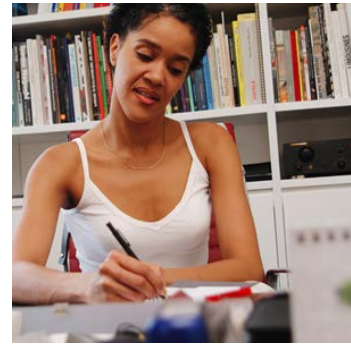
- I need another cup of coffee.
- I should clean my (keyboard, toolbox, work area, etc.) first.
- I really have the munchies. I'll go get some fast food.
- I don't have the right pencils (or other articles).
- Perhaps if I put on some music...
- I'm too tired. I'll just take a quick nap.
- I need more information before I can begin.
- I'll need to make a list of upcoming projects first.
- I'll just ask any colleague about (anything) before I get started.



- I should call (anyone) before I get too involved in this.

Ways to Stop Procrastinating

People procrastinate for many reasons. Regardless of why you put off important tasks, there are ways to get moving. The next time you have trouble getting started, ask yourself why you're doing this to yourself.



Perhaps one of the following solutions will work for you.

PROBLEM: Confusion

You're about to tackle a huge, complex task and you don't know where to begin. You spend hours shuffling the pile of papers on your desk, but you can't seem to find a starting point. Days pass, and you get more and more anxious about completing the project on time.

ACTION: Make Molehills From Mountains

At the beginning of an enormous project, break the job into smaller pieces. Set a long-range goal for completing the project and divide the job into manageable sections.

PROBLEM: Fear of Risk-Taking

Your manager asks you to take on new responsibilities in the marketing department. You've never created a marketing plan and you don't know how to develop new clients. While you're flattered by your manager's confidence in you, you're afraid to make mistakes. The marketing file sits on your desk while you decide what to do next.

ACTION: Learn to Relish Risk

Most successful people face new opportunities knowing they'll make mistakes. But they also know that they'll gain valuable information along the way. Take a close look at your fear of failure. The negative consequences of stagnation are far greater than the dangers of making mistakes.

PROBLEM: Perfectionism

You have some great ideas for a new project. You start writing an outline but rewrite the proposal a dozen times until you get it "just right." Your high standards are keeping you from completing the project.

ACTION: Focus on Completion

While it's good to have high standards, perfectionism can stop you in your tracks. Assess the importance of your project. Let the purpose of the job determine how much time to spend. Focus on completing the work. If you finish early, you can go back and fine-tune.

PROBLEM: Lack of Priorities

Your in-box is stuffed with memos on five different projects—each one marked "urgent." You dart from task to task, but never seem to accomplish anything. Your motivation starts going down the drain when you miss another deadline.

ACTION: Learn to Prioritize

Make a list of all the things that need to be done. Use the ABC method to determine your priorities. Place each item on the list in one of the following categories: *Priority A/Must-Do*; *Priority B/Should-Do*; *Priority C/Nice-to-Do*. When you're prioritizing your tasks, ask yourself why you're doing this work and how it relates to your goals and objectives. Assess the urgency of the project. Ask yourself if you can delegate some of the work to another staff member.

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