



Tips for procrastination

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1. **Accept procrastination is normal:** Procrastination is something everyone gets. Even if you are a master at organization and obedience, the urge to procrastinate will always be there. So, don't feel too hard on yourself if you find yourself procrastinating or have the urge to procrastinate. Everyone will feel this way sooner or later.
2. **Understand why we procrastinate:** For the pre-meds who have taken neuroscience classes please don't crucify me if I get things wrong, as I haven't done my neuro block yet, but this is a simplified version of our brains when we procrastinate. The prefrontal cortex is the part of your brain that creates long term planning, whereas the limbic system is your unconscious that contains the pleasure center. There is a battle between the two for what you do at this moment, with the prefrontal cortex wanting to establish activities that are beneficial for your long-term goals, whereas the limbic system wants you to attain your short-term goals e.g. pleasurable activities. Knowing how we work can help understand why we act in a certain way and what we can do to change this.
3. **Procrastinate with other tasks that you need to get done:** When we get the urge to procrastinate, we will shift towards a task that is less difficult, and yields rewards more easily (e.g. Facebook). You can use this to your advantage by procrastinating with simpler tasks that are on your to do list instead of the more difficult tasks. For example, when I get the urge to procrastinate or feel that I need a break from studying I often go wash the mountain pile of dishes that I left in the kitchen sink. It's not something that I wish to do when I have nothing else to do, but it's easier than studying which helps take care of something that I needed to get done today.
4. **Practice being grateful:** Sometimes we need to take a step back and just look from an outsider's perspective of where we are at in life. Reflect on yourself a month, a year, or five years ago and see how much improvement you have made compared to your current situation. Think of how badly others would want to be in your position and use that to motivate yourself.



5. **Use Pomodoro technique:** The Pomodoro technique involves working for 25 minutes and taking 5-minute breaks. I found this very useful when I had trouble starting work, but after a couple of Pomodoro sessions would find myself foregoing the 5-minute breaks to continue working throughout.
6. **Understand how habits work and how you can change them:** When broken down to its simplest rules, a habit is a very simple process. It is made up of four parts: a cue, craving, response, and reward. If we want to make new habits stick, we need to make them obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying. Conversely, if you want bad habits to go away, we need to make them not obvious, unattractive, difficult, and unsatisfying. A great book I've found that talks more about this is Atomic Habits by James Clear.
7. **Use the 2-minute rule:** If you have a difficult task to complete, the most difficult part is getting started, however once you are in the flow of things time will move fast. To turn a difficult task into an easy one involves making it a shorter goal. For example, if your goal is to go to the gym for 3 times a week in a whole year this sounds daunting at first. Instead make it your goal to go to the gym and exercise for only 2 minutes. This is easy to complete, and once you've finished those 2 minutes of exercise, you'll realize that since you are at the gym anyways you might as well finish your whole routine.

