



Stop Procrastination – Today!

Procrastination is extremely prevalent. [Studies](#) indicate that 80% – 95% of college students engage in procrastination and almost 50% procrastinate consistently and problematically. You are not the only one. But there is a lot you can do about it.

Procrastination can be caused by several things. You may procrastinate because a task is too large and overwhelming and you don't know how to get organized. You may procrastinate because you don't enjoy the task and you are not motivated. You may procrastinate because you think you can't do it. Or you might be simply too distracted or have no energy. Below are a few tips to help combat procrastination in any of these situations, but first take a moment to reflect on the mental habit of non-procrastinators, who **have compassion for their future self**:

*If I put this off, it will just be more trouble for me in the future; or
If I do this now, I will be happier in the future, so
I should just do it now.*

If a task is large and overwhelming ... Divide and conquer:

- [Break a large project down into smaller more manageable tasks.](#)
- Start by defining several milestones (sub-projects).
- Then define tasks to reach your milestones.
- Set deadlines for each milestone or even each step and add them to your calendar.
- Tackle each task step-by-step until the project is done.
- Reward yourself when you achieve them.
- Combine this strategy with the [Pomodoro Technique](#), which is based on time intervals that promote bursts of intense productivity, followed by brief rest periods.

If you don't know where to start ... Make a plan and stick to it:

- Break the project into separate tasks.
- Put the tasks in a logical order and create a timeline by working backwards and starting with the due date.
- Overestimate how long each task will take to ensure you have built-in buffer time.
- Add those blocks of time to your calendar.
- Set mini due dates and connect email, text or in-person reminders to them.
- Tell yourself, I am just going to start this, rather than I need to finish this.
- If you need help creating a plan, talk with your professor, a mentor or an academic coach.

If you don't like the task ... Boost your motivation:

- Make the task or project meaningful and relevant by connecting it to real world scenarios or to your personal goals.
- Set clear and realistic goals to help track your progress.
- Celebrate and [reward yourself](#) immediately after you complete a task.
- Sometimes, all you need to do is get started for a few minutes to "get into it" and motivation will be the result of your action not the prerequisite.
- If you have difficulty initiating a task, create something to react to such as an official deadline or a study group meeting you have to show up to.
- Alternate between fun and not so fun activities to maintain motivation.
- Make the task fun by turning it into a game or competition with others or with an app, such as [StickK](#) or [Beeminder](#).
- Find an [accountability partner](#) and challenge each other or check in with each other (ideally) daily.

If a task feels too overwhelming ... Build up your self-confidence:

- Analyze what is making the task so difficult, and brainstorm possible solutions to that difficulty. "I could do this if ..."
- Visit your professor's office hours
- Join study groups. (Who else could assist you?)
- Remind yourself of your own past achievements.
- What would you say to a friend who faced this same challenge?

If you can't concentrate ... Limit distractions:

- Find a [location](#) where **you** can focus best (e.g. dorm room, library, BCLT).
- Help your mind get into study mode by returning to the same space consistently.
- Make sure your study space has everything you need so that you don't get distracted looking for a pencil or a textbook, etc.
- Limit distractions such as your phone, video games, websites, unnecessary snacks, and maybe even people. Start with short times of limiting distractions.
- Use apps to block distracting website or applications such as [Freedom](#) or [SelfControl](#), which often have built in timers to reinforce the pomodoro technique.
- Consider your energy level and schedule the most avoided tasks for the time of day when you'll have more energy to tackle them. (Healthy eating and sleeping habits can help increase your energy, brainpower and focus.)

Stop procrastinating – Today!

Other resources: [ADDRC](#), [ZenHabits](#), [CollegeInfoGeek](#).

Bowdoin

BALDWIN CENTER FOR
LEARNING AND TEACHING

Academic Coaching

Want to meet with an Academic Coach?
Contact Tina Chong
(cchong2@bowdoin.edu)