

EFFECTIVE PLANNING

The larger and more involved the project, the more difficult it is to plan effectively to carry it out.

The following steps may be helpful:

- Segment the task. The entire job may seem impossible, but smaller segments may be more manageable. Divide the task into small steps.
- Distribute the small steps reasonably within the given time frame. “Reasonably” is the key word; you must allot sufficient time for each step. Do not fool yourself by believing you can do more than is humanly possible. Be realistic!
- Balance is the key. Realize that all of us periodically need variety and relaxation. Intersperse rewards, relaxation and gratification for work completed. This will help you feel less resentful of the task and the work that still needs to be done.
- Monitor your progress on the small steps. Watch for the pitfalls discussed earlier. Assess problems when they arise and do something about them quickly. Keep track of the segments and how they fit together to form the whole picture.
- Be reasonable in your expectations of yourself. Perfectionistic expectations may cause you to rebel or sabotage your progress.

*You may delay,
but time will not.*

-Benjamin Franklin

If you have any questions or would like to make an appointment please contact:

Ed Magalhaes, PhD, LPC

Director of Academic and Counseling Services
Virginia Campus
emagalhaes@vcom.vt.edu
540-231-1944

Or outside counseling services at the New River Community Services:

700 University City Blvd / Blacksburg, VA 24060
Phone: 540-961-8400
(Be sure to identify yourself as a VCOM student)

For emergency care, 24 hours a day, call ACCESS at 540-961-8400

Natalie Fadel, PsyD

Director of Academic and Counseling Services
Carolinas Campus
nfadel@carolinas.vcom.edu
864-327-9875

Or outside counseling services at Spartanburg Area Mental Health Center:

250 Dewey Avenue / Spartanburg, SC 29303
Phone: (864) 585-0366
(Be sure to identify yourself as a VCOM student)

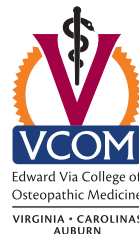
For emergency care, 24 hours a day Crisis Hotline: (864) 585-0366 or 1-800-277-1366

Mary Ann Taylor, PhD

Director of Academic and Counseling Services
Auburn Campus
mtaylor@auburn.vcom.edu
Room 214 // 334-442-4037

Or outside counseling services at Clinical Psychologists, PC:

248 East Glenn Avenue / Auburn, AL
Phone: 334-821-3350
(Be sure to identify yourself as a VCOM student)



Procrastination

The Center for Institutional,
Faculty, and Student Success



Edward Via College of
Osteopathic Medicine
VIRGINIA • CAROLINAS
AUBURN

Procrastination

Procrastination refers to the avoidance of specific work or tasks that need to be accomplished. However, this explanation does not begin to capture the emotions triggered by the word. For most of us, the word “procrastination” reminds us of past experiences when we felt guilty, lazy, inadequate, anxious, or stupid—or some combination of these emotions. It also implies a value judgment: *if I procrastinate, I am a bad person.*

Procrastination is the thief of time.

—Edward Young

FORMS OF PROCRASTINATION

Thoughts and beliefs that lead to procrastination:

- *Do you ignore a task by acting as if it will go away?* The midterm exam is not likely to vaporize, no matter how much you ignore it.
- *Do you underestimate the work involved in the task or overestimate your abilities and resources in relation to the task?* You tell yourself you grasp concepts so easily you only need to spend one hour when it would normally take six.
- *Do you deceive yourself into believing that a mediocre performance or lower standards are acceptable?* You deceive yourself into believing that a 3.0 will be enough for you to pass medical boards, which prevents you from working to improve your GPA and may ultimately alter your career goals.
- *Do you deceive yourself by substituting one worthy activity for another?* Suppose you clean your apartment rather than study for your exam. Valuing a clean apartment is fine, but if it is only important when you have an exam, you are procrastinating.
- *Do you believe that repeated “minor” delays are harmless?* You put off studying for your exam so you can spend five minutes on social media but the five minutes turns into hours with no work accomplished.

- *Do you dramatize a commitment to a task rather than actually doing it?* Taking your books on vacation but never opening them or declining an invitation but still not pursuing the work at hand. This behavior allows you to stay in a constant state of unproductive readiness to work—without ever working.
- *Do you persevere on only one portion of the task?* You may study only board questions and never review your notes or class materials. Board questions are important but not exclusive of other class notes and lecture material.
- *Do you get bogged down in making choices about your academic work?* Perhaps you spend so much time deciding about what or how to study that you don’t have sufficient time to study.

PROCRASTINATION AND ITS CAUSES

To understand and solve your procrastination problems, you will need to analyze the situations that are most problematic for you. First, determine if the cause is poor time management, then learn and develop time management skills. If you know how to manage your time but don’t make use of those skills, however, you may have a more serious issue. Think about what keeps you from doing what you know would help. If you need help with this process, see a counselor.

Many people cite the following reasons for avoiding work:

- *Lack of interest.* If something is not meaningful or relevant to you personally, it may be difficult to begin the task.
- *Acceptance of another’s goals.* If an assignment has been imposed on you and it is not consistent with your own interests, you may be reluctant to spend the necessary time finishing it.
- *Perfectionism.* Having unreachable standards for the outcome of your work will discourage you from pursuing a task. Remember, perfection is unattainable.
- *Evaluation anxiety.* Most people care to some degree about how they are perceived by others. But since other’s responses to your work are not under your

direct control, overvaluing those responses can create the kind of anxiety that will interfere with your getting work accomplished.

- *Ambiguity.* Even if you have accomplished similar tasks before, if you are uncertain of what is expected of you for a particular assignment, it may be difficult to get started.
- *Fear of failure/fear of the unknown.* If you are venturing into a new realm or field, you don’t know what to expect or what it takes to succeed. Such uncertainty may inhibit your desire to begin.
- *Inability to handle the task.* Lack of training, skill, or ability may cause you to feel that you can’t do the job and you may avoid it completely.

WHAT TO DO

If you can visualize yourself in one or more of the previous scenarios, you may be ready to overcome your problems with procrastination. The following list of steps may help you deal with your avoidance problems.

- Read through the previous examples to find the trait(s) that applies to you. Write them down.
- Make honest decisions. If you wish to spend a minimal amount of effort or time on a particular task, admit it. Do not allow guilt to interfere. Weigh consequences of various amounts of investment in a project and find the optimal return for your investment. This step exposes intentional reasons for avoiding work. If you have been unintentionally avoiding work, admit that you want to achieve certain goals and accept the responsibilities involved in meeting them.
- Acquire an understanding of what is necessary to accomplish a task within a given time frame.
- Distinguish between activities that dramatize your sense of commitment and activities that help you accomplish the task. Devote only the appropriate amount of time for each part of a task. Develop an overview of the entire project and visualize steps to reach completion. Write them down, order them, rearrange, or add steps later if needed.