

Activity: PROCRASTINATION QUOTIENT

For each item, indicate the column that most applies to you.

		Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I usually find reasons for not acting immediately on a difficult assignment.				
2.	I know what I have to do but frequently find that I have done something else.				
3.	I carry my books/work assignments with me to various places but do not open them.				
4.	I work best at the “last minute” when the pressure is really on.				
5.	There are too many interruptions that interfere with my accomplishing my top priorities.				
6.	I avoid forthright answers when pressed for an unpleasant decision.				
7.	I take half measures which will avoid or delay unpleasant or difficult action.				
8.	I have been too tired, nervous or upset to do the difficult task that faces me.				
9.	I like to get my room in a good order before starting a difficult task.				
10.	I find myself waiting for inspirations before becoming involved on most important study/work tasks.				
	TOTAL RESPONSES				

	WEIGHT	x4	x3	x2	x1
	SCORE				

Multiply the TOTAL RESPONSE row by the corresponding WEIGHT to get the SCORE for each column. Add up the SCORE row to determine your total score. That number is your Procrastination Quotient.

Procrastination Quotient: Below 20 – Occasional Procrastinator, 21-30 – Chronic Procrastinator, Above 30 – Severe Procrastinator

This rating system is by H. E. Florey of the University of Alabama Counseling Center. Originally available at: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/makinggrade/pquotient.html>

PROCRASTINATION: TEN WAY TO “DO IT NOW”

REMEDIES

1. Rational Self-Talk. Those old excuses really don't hold up to rational inspection. The “two-column technique” will help. Write down all your excuses on one side of a piece of paper. Start challenging the faulty reasoning behind each of the excuses. Write down your realistic thoughts on the opposite side of each excuse. Here is an example of excuses and realistic thoughts.

EXCUSE: I'm not in the mood right now. REALISTIC THOUGHT: Mood doesn't do my work, actions do. If I wait for the right mood, I may never get it done.

2. Positive Self-Statements. Incorporate a list of self-motivating statements into your repertoire of thoughts. Consider...
 - “There's no time like the present.”
 - “The sooner I get done, the sooner I can play.”
 - “There's no such thing as perfectionism. It's an illusion that keeps me from doing what I have to do right now.”
 - “It's cheaper and less painful if I do it now rather than wait until it gets worse.”
3. Don't Catastrophe. Jumping to the conclusion that you will fail or that you are no good at something will only create a wall of fear that will stop you cold. Recognize that your negative predictions are not facts. Focus on the present and what positive steps you can take toward reaching your goals.
4. Design Clear Goals. Think about what you want and what needs to be done. Be specific. If it's getting that work project completed by the deadline, figure out a time table with realistic goals at each step. Keep your sights within reason. Having goals too big can scare you away from starting.
5. Set Priorities. Write down all the things that need to be done in order of their importance. The greater the importance or urgency, the higher their priority. Put “messing around” (distractions) in its proper place – last! Start at the top of the list and work your way down.
6. Partialize the Tasks. Big projects feel overwhelming. Break down into the smallest and most manageable subparts. You'll get more done if you can do it piece by piece. For example, make an outline for a written report before you start composing or do a small portion of the chores rather than all at once. Partializing works especially well with the unpleasant jobs. Most of us can handle duties we dislike as long as they're for a short time and in small increments.
7. Get Organized. Have all your materials ready before you begin a task. Use a daily schedule and have it with you all that time. List the tasks of the day or week realistically. Check off the tasks when you have completed them.

8. Take a Stand. Commit yourself to doing the task. Write yourself a “contract” and sign it. Better still, tell a friend, partner, or supervisor about your plans.
 9. Use Prompts. Write reminders to yourself and put them in conspicuous places like on the TV, refrigerator, bathroom mirror, front door, and car dashboard. The more we remember, the greater the likelihood we’ll follow through with our plans.
 10. Reward Yourself. Self-reinforcement has a powerful effect on developing a “do it now” attitude. Celebrate, pat yourself on the back, smile, and let yourself enjoy the completion of even the smallest of tasks. Don’t minimize your accomplishments. Remember, you’re already that much closer to finishing those things that need to be done.
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This information was written by Kent T. Yamauchi, Ph.D.

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➤ ALSO...

Use the five minute discipline. If you really don’t feel like doing your studying, tell yourself that you’ll try it for five minutes. Set a timer. When the timer goes off, decide whether to quit or carry on for another five minutes. Often once you start the work, you’ll carry on.

Habits of Effective Time Managers

HABIT 1: BE PROACTIVE

Being proactive means taking initiative, not waiting for others to act first, and being responsible for what you do. The opposite of proactive is reactive. Reactive people tend to react to what goes on around them. Proactive people act based on principles and strategies you can use to be more proactive in your own education; focus on how you can take greater control over your semester.

HABIT 2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Think things through. Plan your work. The carpenter's rule is "measure twice, cut once." Planning requires that you set realistic goals, not only for your courses, but also for the various assignments you have to complete. Take a few minutes to write out your goals and then list the steps to achieve them. You may even want to add the element of time to each task—how long will it take and when can you do it.

HABIT 3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

Make sure to distinguish the goals that are truly important (e.g. completion of a research project) from those that may seem urgent but are really not important. (e.g. arranging the weekend's softball game for your buddies). You do not want to spend an inordinate amount of time doing busywork—work that appears productive but only keeps you occupied.

HABIT 4: LOOK AHEAD

Essential to being proactive, as opposed to reactive, is to project ahead. One way to effectively do this is to keep a calendar for each month of the semester. From the syllabi for your courses and the General Information Catalogue, note the important dates such as test dates, due dates of important assignments, times of mid-term and final exams, holidays, registration periods, drop dates, and financial aid deadlines. In filling out your calendars, note the times of the semester that will be difficult for you and begin to develop a plan to address the difficulties you anticipate.

Get a blank monthly calendar and/or blank weekly schedule and use it regularly.

An effective tool for those students who occasionally have more to do than they can keep track of in their minds is the daily "to do" list. First, plan your day at a regular time in the morning or before bed. Then on a 3x5 card or a sheet of paper, list the specific activities you would like to complete for that day.

Originally available online at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/makinggrade/habits.html>

If regularly composing daily “to do” lists is not your thing, consider using one when you find yourself “in the weeds” for example, during mid-terms or the well-known end-of-semester crunch. A well-crafted list can do wonders.

ONE LAST WORD...

If you have never managed your time before, it will take a little bit of time to learn how and to do it. But just like anything else, the more you do it, the better you get. This, in turn, will allow you to schedule time better and faster. The key, of course, is stick with it for approximately 30 days so that you can evaluate its effectiveness. You may discover that you need to make some slight modifications.

Do not assume, however, that you have to do everything outlined in this workshop. Instead identify those suggestions mentioned that will enhance your way of managing time. Perhaps, you prefer to compose daily “to do” lists rather than to maintain weekly schedules.

While you are scrutinizing your use of time, make sure to note any pattern to your wasting time. Also note under what circumstances you use time effectively. No one knows you better than yourself; in most cases, you’re your own best friend.

Things to Consider While Composing Your Weekly Schedule

1. Schedule fixed blocks of time first.

Start with class and work time, for instance. These time periods are usually determined in advance. Other activities must be scheduled around them. Then schedule essential daily activities like sleep and eating. Once you've scheduled fixed blocks of time should be a matter of careful thought and planning.

Also note that optimum efficiency is often reached by planning in blocks of one hour: fifty minutes to study and ten minutes for a break. Yes...take breaks when you study!

2. Discover how long to study for each course.

The rule of thumb that you should study two hours for every hour in class is a rough guide at best. The time required varies from student to student and from subject to subject. Start out by allowing two hours of study for every hour in class, but adjust the hours according to your experience, as you find out how long you need to master each assignment. To that end, monitor your study time (don't forget to note the additional time you think should have been spend on uncompleted or poorly done assignments). Time your text reading. For each of your textbooks, mark off ten pages. Jot down the time you began reading and the time you finished reading. Keep in mind that your reading rate may vary depending on the subject and nature of the information.

3. Use daylight hours effectively.

Many students do not make effective use of daytime hours. These students tend to save all of their work for the evening, when they are least likely to do it or when they are most susceptible to procrastination.

4. Break large assignments into more workable tasks.

When one of your assignments is large and overwhelming, divide it into small, more manageable units. Then schedule your time appropriately. Doing this will help make the assignment less threatening because you now understand the parts that make up the whole, and you also have the beginnings of a rudimentary plan.

5. Allow larger blocks of time for learning new material.

Understanding new material often requires that you analyze difficult concepts, apply those concepts to examples, and then connect those ideas to previously learned material to better understand the significance of what you are learning.

Originally online at: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/makinggrade/weekly.html>

Furthermore, many new time managers fail to understand the implications of “Murphy’s Law”—anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Although that’s not likely to happen for everything, some students tend to underestimate the time required for difficult assignments. Be careful: if you think something is going to take an hour, make sure that’s not wishful thinking. In your scrutiny, you may discover that it’ll take twice as long.

6. Make us of small blocks of time, particularly for review.

Busy students often need to take advantage of small blocks of time. Use short blocks of time to memorize lists of items. For example, spend fifteen minutes memorizing a list; then take a break or do another activity before coming back to your list. It’s also wise to spend a few minutes after each class reviewing, editing, and reciting your lecture notes; and to make rehearsal part of your reading regimen because the greatest amount of forgetting occurs directly after finishing a learning task.

7. Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions.

According to research, distributed study (distributing the work over a period of days) is far more effective than massed study (cramming). The problem with cramming is that there is too little time to seek clarification about difficult concepts and to prepare adequately for most tests—all of which can increase anxiety and lessen your ability to concentrate during a test. And it just doesn’t make a lot of sense in most circumstances. For example, in nine or ten-hour study sessions, the percentage of time actually spent on task can be depressingly small due to fatigue and burnout. Whereas three shorter sessions will likely yield much more productive use of time.

8. Schedule study periods for difficult courses for times when you are most alert and can concentrate best—that is, when you’re running on all cylinders.”

This requires, of course, that you get in touch with your natural rhythms.

9. Set clear starting and stopping times.

If you note only the deadline, there’s a good chance that you’ll wait until last minute to get started.

10. Leave one of the weekend days free for errands, fun and relaxation.

Many time management neophytes forget to schedule time for errands and to set aside time to relax—all of which contributes to stress and lower productivity. Don’t be a “workaholic” and don’t forget to set aside a block of time each week to run errands.

11. Schedule time for fun, but make sure to schedule study hours before fun activities.

If you schedule fun activities before study periods, it's doubtful that you'll ever get around to studying. Furthermore, it's hard to have a good time if you're feeling guilty about not studying.

12. Schedule time for exercise and plan for adequate amount of sleep.

Regular exercise can alleviate stress and enhance concentration. Too little sleep contributes to fatigue, a lack of mental alertness, and irritability. Maintain the ideal amount of sleep, especially when you're under pressure or busy with work. Make no mistake about it: the quality of your education often depends on sufficient sleep.

13. Allow flexibility into your schedule; don't schedule all of your time.

Leave a little room for unexpected events. If you pack your weekly schedule with too many details, the chances of your following such a schedule are very slim.

Cramming

Although you've been told to avoid cramming (studying the night before) there are times when you are left with no other choice. So, if you must, here are some cramming tips:

For students who have worked hard all term but now have three exams in five days so only an evening to review already learned material:

- Write out a course summary
 - Reviewing the structure of the course will help you remember, comprehend, and retain the material
- Work through notes and assignments but just skim the text.
 - This is the best way to set priorities for the time that you have.
- Stay calm and confident!
 - By taking breaks in your studying, by getting at least 6- and preferably 8 hours sleep, and by reminding yourself that working hard all term really will pay off!

For students who've slacked off and are now in justifiable panic:

- Gather information about what's likely to be on the exam.
 - Find out which chapters in the text were covered; get a set of course notes, copy and return them; ask the TA what topics were emphasized.
- Find the following from information gathered: principle themes, sub-topics, and major illustrations. Now memorize them!
 - Repetition is the key to memorization; so is using every trick you can—word association, rhymes, enumeration, sentences from acronyms.
- Be selective. After memorizing major themes, decide what supporting material to concentrate on. You're more likely to remember a narrow range of material covered in depth.
 - Skim the text if there is only one, or skim only chapters that seem emphasized from your information gathering. If there are many texts, pick two to concentrate on. Take time to review what you've covered.
- Be kind to yourself
 - Get at least 6 hours of sleep
- Finally, record the pain of this experience (in a letter or a tape to be addressed next term) so you won't repeat it!

Originally online at: <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs/>

