

# How to Combat Procrastination

By Chris Palmer and Angeli Gabriel

Great men and women have fallen victim to it. Its seduction has made time-wasters of us all. You may even be doing it right now. I am speaking about one of the biggest battles of the human condition: the war on procrastination.

It's not just rebellious teenagers or couch potatoes who procrastinate. CEOs, scientists, philosophers, filmmakers, and a certain RealScreen contributor who was tasked with writing about it are all offenders. Every person on this planet has put off important responsibilities in favor of easier ones. There are a number of possible reasons that must be examined if one is to recognize and put a stop to this bad habit.

The Boredom First of all, some of us put an indefinite delay on tasks simply because they aren't fun. Let's face it. If you have the choice between tidying up the office or tailgating before Sunday's game, chances are your desk is staying buried until Monday. Or Tuesday. But why? You know full well that you can only *benefit* from having a clean and organized workspace, so why is it that a little effort can seem so unappealing and difficult? Tidying up is one of those odd jobs that seem to come along with a heavy sense of tedium. Sometimes there may seem to be no reward for all that work. Frankly, the best way to tackle this is to simply do it and move on. If you have a number of these tasks, be sure to make a list and prioritize them. Even though it may not feel worthwhile at the outset, the sense of completion once you cross each item off your list will allow you to more readily and eagerly address other tasks to be done.

The Intimidation Another reason people procrastinate is that they feel intimidated by the size of a task or the amount of time it will take to complete. For example, editing a video project can involve hours, days, weeks, or even months of looking at footage. Big projects are just that: big. But instead of letting the enormity of a task overwhelm you and getting too hung up on the big picture, try to (1) break down the process into more manageable segments, (2) give yourself "mini-deadlines" for each segment, and (3) begin working as soon as you can. In doing so, the scope of your project may suddenly seem more manageable, and you should discover the motivation to begin your work piece by piece.

The Fear The fear of failure is said to be one of the biggest reasons for procrastination. I once postponed writing a science documentary script just because I was afraid that I might not have all the knowledge I needed about the film's subject. I feared my own ability to articulate my ideas and the information I had gathered. To bring myself to write, I had to take a deep breath and approach the task methodically. If you find yourself tripped up by this fear, try rewinding a bit and just doing some research. Knowledge builds confidence. Use that confidence to your advantage. Try developing strategies to circumvent your obstacles. Be honest with yourself and try to understand what's holding you back. Sometimes you just have to agree that your fear of failing

prevents you from even beginning a task, which ultimately can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Again, procrastination is a habit that people from all sorts of backgrounds struggle with. We are all afraid of failing, we can all be intimidated by work, and we would all do whatever we could to avoid boring and menial tasks – we're human. I once considered procrastination to be something I would simply outgrow; but after all these years filled with a vast array of work and personal projects, I'm still in the trenches. Beginning and completing tasks in advance of a deadline remains a struggle.

While you and I may never be immune to the time-sucking allure of procrastination, with a little self-awareness and a tactical approach, we can still win the little battles.

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