

Procrastination

Procrastination! It is pleasure and guilt rolled into one. When we procrastinate we are putting off something we aren't looking forward to by doing something else. Most people procrastinate to some extent. It becomes a problem when putting work off leaves a lot of last minute work to complete or makes it impossible to complete work. While procrastination may be enjoyable in the short run, most of us feel that little twinge of guilt in the background. In the long run, too much procrastination results in stress. You know you have a problem with procrastination when your work is late or completed poorly because of time constraints.

Procrastination can be a way of avoiding failure. Does that sound odd? Some people procrastinate because putting it off is a way of saying, "Well, if I'd had more time of course I could have made an A." In this case, procrastination is an odd type of sabotage. For others, it is more a problem of dealing with the balance between work and fun. It's a difficult balance to manage, especially when we see others "playing" while we're working. Many times, we aren't even really aware of procrastination. Have you ever found yourself playing that favorite computer game 10 times in a row? Procrastination lasts longer when we involve ourselves in repetitious activities (such as computer games which easily allow playing "just one more game") where we can lose track of time.

Controlling procrastination can be a genuine struggle that requires trying all of the techniques suggested below, plus some creative ones you come up with on your own (which we hope you'll pass on to us). Use these techniques in whatever combination makes sense to you.

- **Work First, Cookie Later** - This technique works well for people who can use rewards to self motivate work. The trick is NOT TO CHEAT! Or if you do cheat to give yourself some consequence you really dislike.
- **The 10 Minute Rule** - This is a famous trick for getting those odious long tasks finished. Graduate students have used it for years to get through thesis and dissertation projects. The 10 minute rule states: Six days out of the week I will work for at least 10 minutes on this project. Of course, the idea is once you get started you will probably work more than 10 minutes on the project. For most people, it is the getting started that is the problem. And you will have some days where 10 minutes is all you can stand without screaming. The idea is, that on those days, you did your 10 minutes so you followed the rule.
- **Heavy Structure** - Heavy structure works well for those who are used to having someone else tell them to get their work done. It requires a daily plan that includes classes, study time, other work, social obligations, and play. Heavy structure is self-imposed and works only when you allow yourself enough time for academics and fun. Some people make the mistake of under scheduling social and playtime resulting in a schedule they simply won't follow. Coming up with a viable schedule means paying attention to times when friends tend to socialize, making sure you have more of that time free, and scheduling academics and work for less tempting times.
- **Rule of Thumb** - Sometimes procrastination occurs simply because the person does not realize how much time it takes to complete a task. The rule of thumb says that for the average class, the typical student will need 2.5 to 3 hours of time devoted to academics for each credit hour. The 2.5 to 3 hours includes preparation and writing of papers, preparation and rehearsal of presentations, daily reading and reviewing of notes, and studying for tests. So a student taking 15 credit hours needs to allow for 37.5 to 45 hours of academic time. So, academics truly become seen as a full

time job. Rule of thumb asserts that being a full time student is like having a full time job. So work the job and then play. Fortunately, the job offers some flextime!

If these techniques don't work for you and you want additional help, contact **Counseling Services** in the **Powell Resource Center** (ext. 6923 or 6144).