

# Support Guide

# Procrastination



A vertical photograph of a desk with a laptop, a notebook, and a glass of water. The word "Procrastination" is written vertically in large, bold, black letters across the center of the image.

# Procrastination

## **Procrastination**

This self-help sheet looks at some of the reasons why people might procrastinate and some of the strategies to help deal with it.

Procrastination is broadly defined as the avoidance of doing a task that needs to be accomplished by a certain deadline. Another way to describe it would be to say that it's a habitual or intentional delay of starting or finishing a task despite knowing that delay might have negative consequences. It is normal to procrastinate and most individuals will find they will procrastinate from time to time. For most people some degree of procrastination often doesn't have any overly negative impact.

Procrastination can become more of an issue for students at university where individuals find the onus of responsibility for dedicating time to study sits with the themselves.

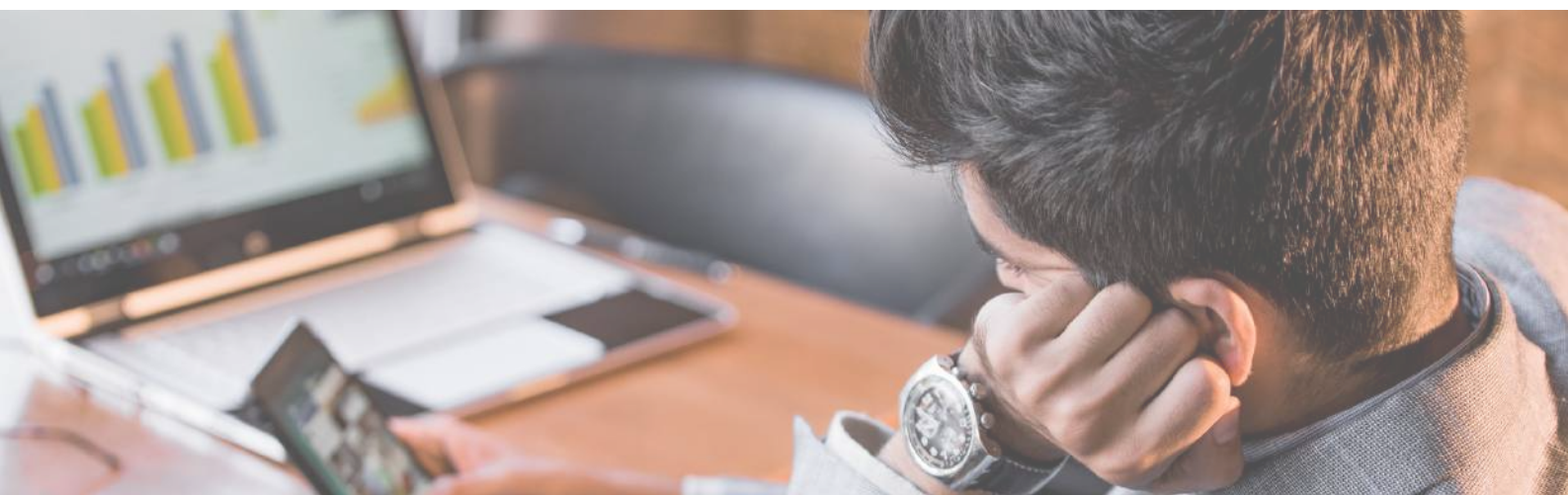
## **Why procrastinate**

The reasons behind why individuals procrastinate are as varied as the individuals themselves and are not well defined. It is important to remember that procrastination is not the same as laziness. More common causes for procrastination can be the result of negative feelings of oneself, out of feelings of inadequacy, out of low tolerances to stressful stimuli or out of a lack of focus. While it is useful to self-reflect you should avoid thinking 'why can't I just do this' or similar ideas and phrases as solutions in themselves.

## Causes of Procrastination

The list below is by no means exhaustive, rather it is indicative to give you some ideas around the varying reasons that individuals procrastinate. As you can see, some of the reasons are comparatively straightforward whereas others can be quite complex:

- Anxiety around a task, the associated expectations and the fear that you may fail in whatever that task is, is often a cause of procrastination. If you know you need a high mark in an assignment for example there may be added pressure which, perversely, may make you less likely to engage. You can find more information on Anxiety and Panic in the corresponding Self-Help sheet.
- All individuals have different levels of tolerance around things that they find difficult or uncomfortable, sometimes 'normal' feelings of confusion or uncertainty around a piece of work or assignment can lead to procrastination.
- Issues of ownership of a task can lead to procrastination, some individuals may feel that the task was not presented to them on their terms or in a manner that they felt comfortable with and so may avoid engaging with it. If you have to submit work in a format or style you are not familiar with or the approach is not one you would have picked you may not feel 'ownership' of the task.
- Perfectionism can also be a cause of procrastination; some individuals may struggle from the beginning of an assignment and may feel that failure to achieve may negatively impact their academic standing overall. If that is the case then the individual may delay further engagement and inducing negative thoughts.
- In some, typically more severe cases, extreme procrastination or displacement activities may be a symptom of an underlying health issue such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Individuals with ADHD may suffer from symptoms such as inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.



## How to Cope with Procrastination

There are a number of strategies that you might wish to try if you feel that you are prone to procrastination.

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- ✓ Structure your time and set yourself manageable goals. Remember Parkinson's Law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion". Try wherever possible to follow study plans once you've made them.
- ✓ Try to identify where in a process or task you are getting stuck, you can simplify this by viewing a task in three pieces; beginning, middle and end. If you become aware of where you're having difficulties then try to focus on progressing that stage in some way no matter how small.
- ✓ Make sure you speak to your module leader and peers about any difficulties you are having with your understanding or progression of the work, you may find that by discussing the work 'log-jams' in your mind clear. When speaking to your peers you may also discover that others are having difficulties and this may relieve feelings of anxiety or inadequacy you maybe having.
- ✓ Reward good progress or engagement through social interaction or exercise or time away from the task at hand.
- ✓ Be mindful of deadlines – this may seem obvious but the longer you put a task off the less time you will have to complete it. Sometimes getting started on a piece of work can be the biggest hurdle and so realising that your time is finite may help you to get things underway.
- ✓ Review the SMART goals outlined in the Studying from Home self help sheet for ideas on how to make tasks more manageable

Speak to someone at **the BUE Student Hub Counselling Service** where advisors can help you with the techniques above.

You can pass by our offices at the BUE Library Lower Floor.

Not on campus and want more information? You can contact us anytime via our email address **[thestudenthub@bue.edu.eg](mailto:thestudenthub@bue.edu.eg)**

The student Hub is a safe, friendly and free space for you. We are here to help you. We are listening.

< TOMORROW

TODAY >