



Motivation & Procrastination

Motivation

Types of Motivation:

- *Intrinsic Motivation*: Driven by largely internal motivating factors, such as love of learning, wanting to master a concept, curiosity, belonging, personal meaningfulness
- *Extrinsic Motivation*: Driven by largely external motivating factors, such as competition/prizes, grades, family/external expectations
- *Finding a balance*:
 - It can be difficult to tap into the intrinsic motivators, which is often what drives us to measure our motivation using extrinsic factors
 - Try to balance these motivators in ways that feel healthy to you.

Task Motivation or Overall Motivation?

- If you're having trouble getting started on schoolwork, an important question to ask yourself is whether this is limited to a certain task/course or if it something you are experiencing overall

What might be contributing to a lack of motivation?

- *Ability*: You don't believe you have the ability to do something
- *Agency*: You believe you have no control over the outcome
- *Value*: If you don't value it, you will not feel motivated about it.
- *Interest*: Taking something you are not interested in leads to low motivation.

Strategies to Overcome a Lack of Motivation

1. *Improved health and an emphasis on routines*: You will be in a better headspace for tackling difficult tasks if your personal health and well-being are tended to (regular eating habits, sleep hygiene, exercise and activity, down time/hobbies)
 - a. If you are having difficulty with your health in a way that is either new to you or has not been well-addressed in the past, please visit the Health Center to speak with a health-care professional
2. *Find the value*. Some tasks have inherent value of their own. Sometimes the value lies in how the task at hand fits into accomplishing your goals whether for the course, the semester, or other long term goals
3. *Make material interesting or fun in some way by appealing to extrinsic motivations*:
 - a. Friendly competitions or study parties
 - b. Make online quizzes, or find some that relate to your courses

- c. Build in brain breaks
 - d. Celebrate successful study sessions
 - e. Alternate the kinds of tasks or subjects to keep things fresh and interesting
4. *Make other choices or reframe your situation:* If it's early in the semester (before the end of the Add Period) consider changing your schedule; if not, use something else (another class or interest) as your fuel to get yourself going in a less-than-ideal course
 5. *Keep your classes balanced:*
 - a. Take 1-2 General Distribution classes at a time: Overloading your schedule with courses that may be more difficult/frustrating/etc. could make it more difficult to keep motivation up
 - b. Be thoughtful about the kinds of academic tasks you are being asked to complete in your classes (reading, essays, exams, etc.)
 6. *Get help from others:* If your having difficulty holding yourself accountable, connect with people who can help (your advisor, a tutor, a study buddy)
 7. *Commit to just 15 minutes:* When tasks start to pile up, it can feel overwhelming. Completing a small task or committing to a relatively short time frame can help you break up the "mountain" of tasks into more easily scalable achievements.

Procrastination

What leads to procrastination?

- *Fear of failure:* Fear that you won't do it correctly, so it prevents you from doing it at all.
- *Lack of knowledge:* Stressing because you don't know enough about what you need to do to feel comfortable with it.
- *Perfectionism:* The inability to produce something that meets your high standards leaves you stuck in a holding pattern
- *Stress:* Overall fear about going to school and what it means for your life.
- *Lack of Purpose:* Unable to see the reason for a particular task
- *Lack of Engagement:* Work may seem overwhelming, repetitive, or boring

Strategies to Overcome Procrastination

1. *Make a list:* Keep it real and visible! Cross items off when complete. There is something satisfying about physically crossing out tasks you have completed.
 - a. *Define your tasks clearly and realistically.* For example, "study Gen Chem" is much too vague; a better option would be a list of smaller steps or tasks:

- i. Reread Ch. 17.
- ii. Review Wed. lecture notes.
- iii. Do assigned practice problems 17.1-5.

This helps you to feel less overwhelmed and more clear about where to start as well as providing a sense of accomplishment as you are able to work through each of those smaller tasks.

- b. *Prioritize your assignments and build in breaks and support systems.* For example, whenever possible build in your study time around available support options such as your faculty member's office hours. This will allow you to seek help quickly if you need clarification.
- c. *Start small:* If you are really struggling, it can be easy to become immobilized with the perceived enormity of your tasks. Concentrate on one small task to get yourself started.

2. Routinize the work

- a. Incorporating your work into a regular routine will naturally ward off the spectre of procrastination. Please see our information on habits for hints!

3. Don't let perfect be the enemy of good

- a. Often perfectionism can contribute to procrastination. Keep in mind that only you can "see" the perfect vision in your head that you feel you can't produce in the real world. Whatever you are able to do is most likely still excellent work and will only get strengthened by editing and feedback from your faculty. You are here to learn, not be perfect from the start!

4. Ask for help

- a. If you start to notice a pattern in a particular class or type of assignment, asking for help early can disrupt the potential procrastination. Start with an email to faculty or office hours and be honest. If you are unsure of where to begin that conversation check our *Using Professor's Office Hours* sheet for tips.