

Practical Tips to Reduce Procrastination

- ✓ Create a distraction free environment. Do whatever you can to eliminate distractions. Consider:
 - Noise cancelling ear buds or headphones
 - Closing doors, blinds, or curtains
 - Keeping a tidy work area
 - Closing other tabs or windows on your computer
 - Turning off all notifications
 - Putting your phone away
- ✓ Take frequent breaks.
- ✓ Use the pomodoro technique: Work in short intervals and set a timer (10 to 25 minutes), followed by short breaks (5-10 minutes) to maintain concentration and avoid burnout. The more averse you are to the task, the shorter you can set the timer to work on the task.
- ✓ When you start to lag, re-energize with short bursts of high intensity exercise. Jumping jacks, skip rope, dance, run up and down stairs, push-ups. Do something very energetic for 3 to 5 minutes. This will raise your dopamine levels and make it easier to focus. Repeat when necessary!
- ✓ Ask for help with your task.
- ✓ Get someone to do it with you, or even just have someone sit with you (known as body doubling).
- ✓ Remind yourself what will go wrong for you, what you won't get or be able to do, if you don't get the task done.
- ✓ Getting something done to some degree is better than not done at all. An easy example is a student essay that is due. You can hand in a draft and get a 50% or hand nothing in at all and get 0%. The 50% will be a lot less damaging to your final grade. The same can be true for some household projects. Getting some of the dishes or rooms cleaned is better than none at all.
- ✓ If the task is for someone else and can be broken down into discrete deliverables, do so and schedule regular reviews.
- ✓ Make a realistic schedule of any project sub tasks and when you will complete each sub-task. Schedule review meetings for those sub-deliverables. If possible, create some kind of penalty for failing to meet a deliverable.
- ✓ If you are a contractor, have your payments linked to distinct deliverable stages.
- ✓ If it is a solo project, enlist a friend or family member to do reviews with. If you are averse to doing this with a colleague, partner or friend, ask yourself why.
- ✓ Set alarms throughout the day to help you keep track of time and commitments.
- ✓ When having trouble getting started, pick any piece of the project that seems a bit interesting, and give yourself ten minutes to work on just that piece. From the outset, give yourself permission to quit after 10 minutes.
- ✓ When you find yourself in that state of hyper focus or flow, make room for it, even if that means cancelling something you had planned.
- ✓ Do you have to do it? Can you do a trade of some kind with someone? If this same situation or task is frequently occurring is there a way to phase it out of your life?