Procrastination is caused by many factors. To help you discover your reasons for procrastinating, complete the survey below. When you are finished, examine the possible meaning behind your responses in the answer guide. Then, complete the Procrastination Behaviors Checklist to discover your own procrastination behaviors.

Answer yes or no to each of the following questions based on what is generally true for you.

Yes  No

☐  ☐  Do you sometimes ask yourself “what’s the point” before you do a task?

☐  ☐  Do you often put things off you don’t value or aren’t interested in?

☐  ☐  Do you often think you work best under pressure?

☐  ☐  Do you like to do exciting and/or risky activities fairly often?

☐  ☐  Do you sometimes give up before you start a task because you don’t know where to start?

☐  ☐  Do you often try to do several things at once without completing many?

☐  ☐  Do you sometimes settle for mediocre results when you could do better?

☐  ☐  Do you often put things off that you’re not good at?

☐  ☐  Do you often give up on a task when it gets difficult?

☐  ☐  Do you often lose motivation in the middle of a task?

The reasons we avoid doing certain tasks often gives us clues to why we procrastinate. Some of these factors involve confusion about goals and priorities; others are a result of your personality or self-image. Still others are common problems with certain types of tasks.

Source: “Take Control of Your Academic Life.” The Center for Academic Support, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.
Procrastination Survey Answer Guide

A yes for any of the questions can be interpreted as a possible cause of procrastination. Only you can determine if it is a real problem for you.

1) You may lack clarity in your long-term goals or may have difficulty seeing the necessary steps to reach them. Often the task you may be avoiding can be related to a long-term goal. It is essential that you see how your immediate goals are attached to short-term goals and, ultimately, long-term goals.

2) This question concerns values. You must accept to a degree the value systems built into an education system or institution before you can put effort into tasks related to them. Possibly, the problem is lack of interest. We often don’t value things we aren’t interested in. However, you may need to complete such tasks to reach your goals.

3) You may think you work best under pressure but may have never examined the quality of your work while NOT under pressure. You might assume you work better this way because it’s comfortable and has become a habit. You may like the idea of being known as someone who can pull it off at the last minute. Procrastination may be part of your identity.

4) Research has shown that people who lead high-risk lives tend to procrastinate more than people who do not. Procrastination may be part of your personality. Be careful to prevent your natural tendencies from interfering with your productivity.

5) You may put off tasks because you are overwhelmed by the size or difficulty of them. It’s better to risk starting at the wrong place than not to start at all.

6) Avoiding unpleasant tasks by doing other tasks might make you feel productive; however, the tasks you complete are probably of lower priority than the ones you are putting off.

7) You may procrastinate to set yourself up to do poorly. You may not want to meet the rising expectations associated with success. This is often referred to as “fear of success.”

   Example: A student who consistently hands in work late may receive lower grades even though the work is of high quality.

8) The opposite of “fear of success” is “fear of failure.” In this case, you ensure that your failure is based on forces other than your own competence, so that your abilities cannot be questioned.

   Example: A student who never hands in his math homework because he’s afraid he will do it wrong. The failure then becomes based on the missing assignments, not the student’s ability.

9) You may put off tasks hoping they will magically become easier or more interesting. The fact is that few things become clearer the more you avoid them, and often you will have squandered your opportunities and time for getting assistance.

10) It’s common to lose your drive in the middle of a task, especially if it’s a long or tedious one. It’s easier to be motivated at the beginning and end of a large project. The best way to avoid this problem is to break the task into smaller chunks so there are more “beginnings” and “endings.”

Knowing why you procrastinate can help you take control of rationalizing your behaviors.
Now that you have investigated the possible reasons why you procrastinate, your next step in stopping procrastination is developing an awareness of when and how you do it. The activities you engage in when procrastinating are no necessarily bad in and of themselves. There are time when engaging in these activities is not only appropriate, but necessary. It’s when you engage in these behaviors frequently for the purpose of putting off tasks that they become a problem.

Check the activities you frequently engage in to avoid doing other tasks.

- Hang out with friends
- Play video games
- Go to parties; socialize
- Clean or organize
- Exercise
- Text or chat
- Shop
- Talk on the phone
- Eat or cook
- Sleep
- Watch TV
- Download music
- Daydream
- Do nothing
- Do other tasks
- Surf the internet

Developing an awareness of the activities you use for procrastinating will help you stop engaging in them when they aren’t appropriate.

**Tips to Stop Procrastination**

Procrastination is a symptom of poor time management. It can be “cured” by using good time management techniques.

- Examine your values
- Assess your goals
- Prioritize tasks
- Have realistic expectations
- Break large tasks into smaller tasks
- Force yourself to work for a period of time
- Tell others you are going to complete a task
- Reward yourself for not procrastinating
- Get help if the task is too difficult
- Talk to someone about any fears
- Find a study partner
- Get rid of distractions

Source: “Take Control of Your Academic Life.” The Center for Academic Support, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.