

# 10 Tips for Getting it Done Today

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July 20, 2009

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2009/07/20/10-tips-for-getting-it-done-today/>

Procrastination is something most people have had to deal with at some point in their lives. We put things off, especially things that are boring, lengthy, drudgery, or might challenge us in some unexpected or unforeseen way. It's not that we don't think we can do it (although for some people, that's indeed a thought that enters their mind); it's more often the case that we know we can do it, we just **don't want to**.

Procrastination can be beaten through some simple tips — by becoming more aware of the self-defeating thoughts you're telling yourself about doing the task, and by becoming better organized. Although the tips are easy, putting them into use takes practice and repetition. Don't get discouraged if you don't succeed at first; just try it again. Take charge over your procrastination with these tips:

## 1. Know how long it takes.

Sometimes we don't do something because we imagine it will take much longer than it actually does. This false belief keeps us from even starting something. It is usually easy to estimate the actual amount of time it takes to complete a task by simply keeping track of the amount of time spent on tasks just once. For example, if you track that it takes you approximately 5 hours of study time to get a good grade on a history exam, you can use that information for helping to better schedule your study time on future exams.

## 2. No time like the present.

You will be no better motivated in the future than you are right now, at this very moment. This common fallacy leads many people who procrastinate to simply putting off things into the future when they're in "the right mood." Your ability to be successful at any task is not dependent upon your mood. Sometimes we have to do something we don't like to do, even if we don't feel like it, just to get it done.

## 3. Challenge irrational thoughts and cognitive distortions in a daily journal.

A lot of the things we tell ourselves to put off doing something are actually one of the common cognitive distortions. Challenging your thoughts and beliefs about how you work and how to best complete a task is something you should get in the habit of doing on a daily basis. It is sometimes helpful to people to keep a little journal of your thoughts that need to be challenged, as well as a rational response to the thought.

## 4. All tasks can and should be broken down into parts.

Tasks are usually easier when we break them down into smaller, more digestible parts. You do this by setting smaller milestones, dates when certain parts of that task should be completed. For instance, writing a paper might have 5 or 6 milestones: (1) select topic; (2) research topic; (3) organize notes into a paper outline; (4) write rough draft; (5) have friend review; (6) write final draft and review. Each one of these should be noted in the organizer with a due date. Cleaning out the garage might be: (1) organize stuff into piles of (a) to store and organize in garage, (b) throw out, (c) find place in house, and (d) take to storage; (2) processing the piles; (3) take trash to dump; (4) sweep out clean garage.

## 5. Work backwards from a due date.

Some things are easier to organize and beat procrastinating about than others. Things with a due date — like a project, a big presentation, meeting or exam — are usually the easiest. Start by working backwards from the due

date. Use the information gathered from “know how long it takes” and breaking a task down into parts to set a weekly backwards countdown of specific parts of the task and the day that part needs to be completed by. In this way, you’ll know exactly where you stand every day and week.

#### **6. Keep track of it all in an organizer (or organizer app).**

Some people find an organizer (or organizer app) can be an invaluable tool in helping keep themselves on-task on a daily basis. But organizers are not just for projects, appointments, classes or meetings. Note holidays, times you need to set aside for other social activities, other professional appointments, and dates that impact your work (or school) schedule. Sometimes people leave these things out of their organizer, forgetting that a trip to visit some far away friends could easily impact their study time a day or two ahead of time as they have to pack, make arrangements for their pets, etc. Schedule social time? You bet. If scheduling your life and being better organized helps you get more things done, then it’s a beneficial tool that you should use.

#### **7. Keep a daily to-do list.**

Some people hate them, some people can’t live without them. For most procrastinators, it’s a good idea to keep a to-do list every day of things that should be accomplished for both the day and the week. Even if you have to write a new one every day, keeping such a list will go a long ways to keeping your procrastination under control.

#### **8. Start every day with a review of your day, week and to-do list.**

At the start of every day, make it a habit to begin your day by opening to that day in your organizer and reviewing not only that day’s tasks or appointments, but also review the entire week. If it’s a Friday, look to next week in case there are any deadlines on the following Monday. Keep your to-do list updated — cross things off that are done, add things you need to do in the future, and rewrite the list once a week (or better yet, keep it all electronically organized on your cell phone or the like).

#### **9. Keep your schedule up-to-date.**

A schedule is only as good as it is current. Mark due dates in your appointment book the first moment you are aware of them (such as a new appointment, a date with a friend or your significant other, a meeting, or a project deadline). Sometimes people get lost or confused by keeping an organizer because they don’t take the time or effort necessary to maintain it and keep it updated. Get into the habit of doing it, and it’ll become second nature within a few weeks.

#### **10. Take back control and reward yourself when you finish a task.**

Procrastination is a means of letting our assignments, projects, meetings and due-dates get the better of us. Instead of being in control of our lives, we let our life’s responsibilities take control of us. By combating procrastination head-on with tools and strategies, you’re taking back control of your own life. The feeling of having this renewed sense of control can be empowering and re-energize you, even allowing you to consider taking on more in the future.

A part of feeling empowered is also to reward yourself when you complete a task. Because life isn’t simply about getting things done, but enjoying the process too. Even if you can’t enjoy every task needing to be done, you can at least enjoy the sweet success of completing it with a token reward (such as buying yourself a small gift, indulging in something you wouldn’t ordinarily eat, etc.). It also gives you something to look forward to in completing the next task on your list.

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