

# Independent Learning Newsletter Tips

## Top 10 Tips for Overcoming Procrastination

Procrastination is the act of putting off a task which you know you have to do, even though you know that putting it off will probably be worse for you in the long run. For example, when you procrastinate about starting an assignment it doesn't make the assignment go away, or the deadline change, it just gives you less time to get the work done. To manage this, try the following:

1. **Become aware of the excuses you use** - make a mental note when you procrastinate. What excuses do you give yourself? Too tired? Too difficult? Too boring? Being aware is the first step in changing your behaviour. Keep yourself honest by asking questions like "is this the best use of my time at the moment?" and "am I doing this as a way of avoiding what I really should be doing?".
2. **Reduce or eliminate distractions** - creating a clear, uncluttered work environment which is free from distractions will help you avoid procrastinating. Turn off your social media or WiFi, turn off your music or TV, close the door. It's easy to get distracted and lose focus on what you are trying to do, or to procrastinate by surfing websites that are barely related to the topic you are meant to be researching. You can find out more in the *Home Study Environment* unit and *Dealing with Distractions* unit.
3. **Make a prioritised list** - before you start work (or procrastinating) take a few minutes to work out what your priorities for the session are, based on your deadlines. Take into account all the time you have available and make a prioritised list. Work on the most important thing first (see also tip 7 below). There is more information in the *Time Management Skills* unit on techniques for prioritising.
4. **Break down projects into chunks** - if you have a big task that you have to do, or something that you really don't want to start, have a think about how it can be broken up into smaller parts. A big assignment might need a plan, the purchase of resources, a trip to the library, internet based research, and then several days to write and edit each section. If you just focus on doing one of these tasks it's easier to commence.
5. **Just start** - stop focusing on getting it done perfectly, or even well, just make a start, even if it's just for a few minutes. Starting the task makes you realise it's not as daunting as you originally thought and allows you to make a small amount of progress which encourages you to keep going. Sometimes once you get started you can even do more than you originally thought you could or would.
6. **Reward yourself** - set yourself a small goal (to do with the task you are procrastinating about) and then reward yourself appropriately when you complete

it. For example, write an outline for your essay and then have afternoon tea. You will be more motivated to complete the task to get the reward. Note: for extreme procrastinators you may need to get someone else to check you've done the work and to give you the reward! Learn more about this in the *Goal Setting* unit.

7. **“Twofer Concept”** - when you are working on a difficult or boring task, break it up by having a more interesting or easy task that you work on in the same study block. You get 2 lots of homework done, but when you are losing focus on the difficult one you can switch to the easier one for a bit of a break.
8. **Create routines** - establishing a routine can help you avoid procrastination as you get into the rhythm of working for a set time each day at a set time of the day. Making this routine known to your family and friends also helps keep you accountable and stops them interrupting you during your work time.
9. **Find a study buddy** - perhaps starting that difficult work will be easier if you have someone to work with. This could be a school friend or a sibling. You could share resources and help each other to get started with similar work.
10. **Schedule in breaks** - breaks give you time to think and process information that you have been working on and give you an opportunity to do the things you really enjoy. Plan them as much as you plan your work.

*So learn more this year about how to improve your results and be more efficient and effective with your schoolwork by going to the links section in your portal and opening the ELES handbook:*

