We all procrastinate once in a while but habitual procrastination can lead to increased stress and anxiety and set you up for failure. You know you are procrastinating when you keep putting off a task for no good reason.

For many students procrastination is a serious ongoing problem, but as it is a learned behaviour, the good news is you can unlearn it.

Why do we procrastinate?
We often mask our procrastination by busying ourselves with other “important” tasks unrelated to what we should be doing; that important phone call, a documentary we should watch, the laundry, cleaning the fridge.

There are many reasons why students procrastinate. Here are a few of the most common reasons.

- **Feeling overwhelmed:** It’s mid semester and you have assignments due for all your classes, plus you have two tests coming up and a quiz! Because you haven’t managed your time too well, it becomes a bit overwhelming and seems impossible to get it all done on time. This creates feelings of anxiety and stress, which in turn makes it difficult to focus on your work.
- **It’s too hard:** You may be unsure where to start on an assignment, or what is expected in order to complete it. This can be a common problem for students, particularly in the early stages at University.
- **It’s boring:** Many students procrastinate if they find their work uninteresting or unpleasant.
- **Perfectionism:** Students can set unrealistically high standards for themselves. Fear of not meeting these standards can cause procrastination.
- **Too many distractions:** A study environment with lots of distractions can make it difficult to focus on the task at hand.
- **Lack of motivation:** All of the above can make students feel less motivated about completing their work.

**MANAGING YOUR PROCRASTINATION**

There are lots of strategies you can use to overcome procrastination. Ultimately though, managing your procrastination comes down to you and the decisions you make. The excuses we use to justify our procrastination generally have an element of truth and that can help us justify putting the task off until “we’re ready”, “have everything we need”, are in the “right frame of mind” and any number of other excuses. These excuses play a big role in perpetuating procrastination, so we need to be aware of our excuses so we can challenge them.

Next time when you are deciding between starting on your assignment and going out with friends or watching television, consider what’s going through your mind at that time. You might be telling yourself that “I’ve got plenty of time” or that “it will help me relax before I study.” By recognising these moments and taking an active stance against procrastination, you can choose to be in charge of how you spend your time.

**Beating procrastination**

- **Learn to recognise** when you are procrastinating and what are your excuses.
- **Challenge** your excuses. How realistic are they?
- **Begin** on a section of the task that you can get going straight away. You don’t have to start on the hardest part. However if you do, that that’s a big section out of the way. The important thing is to get going.
- **Break your work up in to sections.** It’s easier to see the project as a series of small steps and knowing the first step makes it easier to get started. Make the steps small and attainable.
• **Plan a time to get started on it.** If you schedule a time to do it, you’re more likely to actually get started, rather than waiting for the “right” time. It also helps to think ahead about where you will make time to get things done and what exactly you will be doing.

• **Set realistic timelines and allow for some flexibility.** Keep track of your progress.

• **Plan time for breaks.** It’s not realistic to study for 5 hours, so you might as well plan when you’ll take a break, what you’ll do, and for how long so you maintain control of your schedule. Have a balance between studying, keeping healthy and enjoying life.

• **Minimize distractions.** Our ability to resist temptation diminishes each time we’re faced with another temptation. Set up your study space and your schedule so you make good decisions.

• **Measure your progress.** Find a way to track what you’ve accomplished so you can see your progress and results. Checking things off your list can help motivate you to get more done. Celebrating your accomplishments will increase your motivation to do more in the future.

• **Reward** yourself after each completed task

• **Remember** there is no such thing as a “perfect” essay or assignment