Dealing with Procrastination

Many students struggle with procrastination and motivation issues. Use this resource to help you identify why and when you procrastinate, and to help you stay on track with your academic goals.

Awareness

Assess the nature of your procrastination
How do I procrastinate? (e.g. videos, social media, chores, shopping, video games, etc.)

When do I tend to procrastinate the most?

- Before exams/tests
- Specific classes (indicate them):_________________________
- Before assignments are due
- When I have to write a paper
- Other (specify): __________________

Sometimes I procrastinate because (check all that apply):

- I don't know where/how to begin a certain task (feeling overwhelmed)
- Completing the task doesn't seem urgent right now  
  i.e. “I have plenty of time”
- I don't think it will take very long to complete (i.e. starting the night before)
- I don't think that doing a good job (on all, or a part) will matter that much overall
- Other (specify):_____________________

Some ways that procrastination has affected me in the past (check all that apply):

- Handing in assignments late / missing important deadlines
- Feeling overwhelmed when the work piles up
- Low achievement (you know you could have have done better if you started earlier).
- Disappointment with academic results
Action

Create a to-do list and plan ahead

1. Make a to-do list:
   - Create a list of tasks to finish by the end of the week and complete 1-2 items on the list each day.
   - Rate the tasks by priority or list the tasks in order of importance (where #1 needs to be done first and the rest follow sequence).
   - Be realistic: set reasonable time frames for completing tasks.
   - Do not spend too much time being stuck on one task – move onto another and come back to it with a fresh and rested mind.
   - Update your to-do list every day.

2. Use a calendar; your best friend throughout school!
   - Keep track of due dates by using an agenda or calendar
   - Pick a format that works for you: electronic or paper
   - Update your calendar daily

3. Plan ahead:
   - Do at least 30 minutes of school work per day. Challenge yourself by increasing the time each day. Time yourself and track your progress.
   - Divide a large task or assignment into smaller steps; set due dates for each step.
   - Try using the Ryerson Assignment Calculator.
   - Avoid cramming for a test/exam the night before. Start studying for an exam early, read/review a little every day.
   - Find and use a designated study area with minimal distractions.
   - Plan time for reward/fun activities each week after completing your goal(s).
   - Find your own rhythm and stick to it. Make a habit of your study routine.
   - Set realistic goals for yourself. Goals should be measurable and time-specific. Examples:
a. During exam period, two days before each exam my goal is to study for 30 minutes every 2 hours for a total of 3 hours a day.
b. My 1,500 word essay assignment is due in one week. I will write 250 words a day for 6 days and edit for one day before handing it in.

Application

Set a goal and make a plan.

My goal to tackle procrastination: ________________________________

I will accomplish my goal by practicing the following strategies:

1. ___________________________________
   ___________________________________
   ___________________________________

2. ___________________________________
   ___________________________________
   ___________________________________

3. ___________________________________
   ___________________________________
   ___________________________________

For more resources, support, and workshops visit the SLS website at www.ryerson.ca/sls

References

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_96.htm
http://www.lib.sfu.ca/slc/strategies/managing-time/procrastination-results-reasons-stopping