



Overcoming Procrastination

GRS Writing Group – FRI 2 NOV 2018

Procrastination is a normal reaction to the challenges of research

The UK body, Vitae, whose mission is to help researchers realise their full research potential, state it is normal for research students to face significant difficulties at some stage in their research course. These difficulties may result from a lack of motivation, confidence, focus, or support. Some difficulties may be caused by the unpredictability of the research or the research environment. Some may be easy to address using skills developed from overcoming difficulties in the past, and others may not be so easy to overcome. Some researchers will face ongoing significant difficulties, others will be lucky enough to avoid any major obstacles to progress.



Vitae. 2011. Overcoming challenges common to doctoral researchers.

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/doing-a-doctorate/starting-a-doctorate/overcoming-challenges-common-to-doctoral-researchers>

Given your research course is likely to be difficult at some stage, it is also likely that as some point you will try to avoid the stress, anxiety, or mental challenge this difficulty presents. While a certain amount of avoidance in moderation is healthy and necessary, sometimes this avoidance turns into 'full blown' procrastination, stalling your progress. If you feel you are avoiding doing the things you should or would like to do, perhaps you may want to consider a 3 step strategy to overcome procrastination.

1. Acknowledge you procrastinate and understand what type of procrastinator you are

One of the first steps in overcoming procrastination is acknowledging what your procrastination behaviors look like. Some research behaviors feel productive (excessive planning, searching for references, reading, analyzing, editing) but can be avoidance behaviors.



<http://www.tastefullyoffensive.com/2013/09/the-12-types-of-procrastinators.html>

2. Explore what might be causing you to procrastinate

Procrastination at the doctoral level is rarely caused by laziness. To get to this point in your career, you cannot have been a lazy student. But you are likely to have perfectionist tendencies and be fearful or

imperfection or may suffer from the Imposter Syndrome. According to Hugh Kearns “The imposter syndrome is that nagging feeling you have, that somehow you don’t belong, you haven’t earned your success and that at any moment you will be uncovered.”



Kearns, Hugh. The Imposter Syndrome Free Guide.

<https://impostersyndrome.com.au/index.php/the-free-guide/>

Some other causes of procrastination are:

- Feeling overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the project
- Feeling pressured by time constraints
- Feeling uncomfortable about the mental challenge of the project
- Being fearful of feedback
- Being fearful of success. What will I do? Will I be able to handle the next step in my career?



Farkas, Dora. Why You Cannot Beat Procrastination With Better Time Management

<https://finishyourthesis.com/procrastination/>

3. Train to be more productive

When running, you need to train to improve your running technique, to understand the pain is manageable, and to appreciate the joy of running a certain pace over a certain distance. Similarly you can train yourself to be productive. Once you understand your procrastination behaviour, both what it look likes and what drives it, it is time to plan for productivity, embrace feelings of discomfort, and look forward to the rewards of productivity.

What this productivity training looks like depends on the tasks you need to complete (reading, writing, thinking, researching) and what is holding you back from completing the task.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/tips-for-overcoming-procrastination-2795714>



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/04/13/14-ways-you-can-overcome-procrastination/#499f61f117df>



<https://www.findaphd.com/advice/blog/1566/avoiding-procrastination-6-ways-to-save-your-phd>



<http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/01/07/how-to-procrastinate-efficiently-if-you-cannot-stop/>



<http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2014/08/21/thesis-writing-tips-for-the-i-left-it-to-the-last-minute-phd-student>

Is all procrastination bad?

No. Some of you may be concerned you are procrastinating, when in fact you are productive and making good progress. A certain degree of procrastination can be useful to your research, as it gives you time to percolate ideas. Some call this 'slow –cooked research' that allows you to “to slowly marinate in a cauldron of ideas”.



Cook, Jonathan. A Recipe for Slow-Cooked Research: There's power in letting things stew...

<https://journalofbeautifulbusiness.com/a-recipe-for-slow-cooked-research-c635b92b89a9>

Next session DEC 7: Mind Mapping

Find further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, see:

www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup