25 PROCRASTINATION BY-PASS TECHNIQUES[1]

1. The Knock-Out Technique

The harder and more distasteful a task is, the better it is to do it immediately.

2. Worst-First Approach

3. Remember-Forgetting Technique

Whenever you remember forgetting to do a task you've been procrastinating at, do it - at least some of it - immediately.

4. Bits and Pieces Approach

Do anything in connection with the task you want to accomplish. Gradually do more and more until the task itself doesn't seem so impossible to do. This approach is good for getting started on tasks or activities which are quite large and overwhelming or a bit stressful. The approach helps you to break the ice and get going. Don't worry about how to do the job correctly.

5. Salami Technique

List all the different steps you have to take to complete a job. Concentrate on taking the first step, then the next, until you complete the full journey.

6. Five-Minute Plan

Take a task you've been procrastinating at and work on it a minimum of five minutes a day. Once you've finished five minutes, then you can set yourself another five minutes and then another. Getting yourself going is frequently the key.

7. Switching

This technique helps you to use the momentum you gain from working on one activity and switch over to another less attractive task you've been procrastinating over. Rather then rest, use the energy you still have to switch over to a more onerous task.

8. Referenting

Make a list of all the good things which will happen if you stop procrastinating at important tasks and of all the miserable results of your procrastination. This technique is particularly effective if you want to gain control over some strongly ingrained habit such as drinking, smoking, over-eating, or excessive partying.

---

[1] From Bernard, Michael E., **Procrastinate Later**!, Schwartz & Wilkinson (Melbourne), 1991.

9. Premack Principle

The Premack Principle states that people are more likely to engage in low probability behaviour (say, hanging up clothes when arriving home), if what immediately follows the low probability behaviour is high probability (something which they enjoy and engage in often, such as having a snack).

10. Getting a Round Tuit

Get yourself a round tuit and get on with what you need to do.

11. Face the Music

Procrastination can be self-perpetuating when you find it hard to admit to yourself and to others that you have been delaying something which you said you'd do. However, when you do eventually face the music, the criticism and pain that you predict will actually be less than more.

12. Swap Out Technique

Arrange to swap problem-solving help with someone rather than procrastinate when you hit a problem you can't solve.

13. Peak Performance Time

Schedule the task or activity you've been putting off at a time when you are most alert, rested and energised.

14. Do It, Delegate It, Ditch It

The idea behind this technique is that you will procrastinate less often if you leave as few loose ends as possible from one day to the next. Instead of getting in the habit of leaving things until you get "around tuit" or putting things away temporarily, it is a good policy to deal with things immediately.

15. Establish Priorities

16. Establish a Set Time to Begin your Work

17. Change Your Environment

Sometimes making simple changes in your environment can help you give up bad habits.

18. Isolation

Sometimes getting away from social distractions can help us to focus on the task at hand.

19. Visible Reminders

Display a small or large sign which will remind you that there is a job to be done.

20. Monitoring

From Bolles, What Color is Your Parachute: "Decide whom you know (spouse, roommate, friend, etc.) that you can take into your confidence about this. Tell them what you need to do, the hours it will take, and how much you need them to keep you at this task. Then put down in your appointment book a regular weekly date when they will guarantee to meet with you, check you out on what you've done already, and be very stern with you if you've done little or nothing since your previous week's meeting. The more a taskmaster this confidant is, the better."

21. Guided Imagery

The key to using visualisation successfully is to form very vivid and real pictures of you completing a task using as many of your senses as possible. Visualise every aspect of the activity.

22. Rational-Emotive Imagery

Form two separate images related to the task which you are putting off. First, imagine yourself very uncomfortable and resistant, nervous and uptight. Get in touch with these uncomfortable feelings. Secondly, imagine the same scene and task, but imagine yourself doing the task confidently, comfortably and well. Now that you have been able to change your feelings, reflect on how you were able to achieve this."

23. The Catastrophe Scale

Think about a time when you are procrastinating at something. At the time you are putting it off, how bad is it for you to have to do the task on a scale of 1 to 100 where 100 is the worst thing in the world and one is the most favoured. Think of a number between 1 and 100. On a scale of world catastrophes, where would you put having to do the task you've been putting off? When most people apply the Catastrophe Scale to their procrastination, they can see that they have been blowing the unpleasantness of having to do the task or activity way out of proportion.

24. Paradoxical Intention

Two suggestions:

- Procrastinate to the best of your ability for a week. Continue to put off as many important and unimportant jobs and activities as you can.
- Observe your procrastination for a week. Keep track of how often and for how long you procrastinate at different tasks. Keep careful recording of what you procrastinate at, where and for how long.

25. Behavioural Self-Control

- Goal-setting
- Self-observation
- Environmental Control
- Self-rewards/Self-penalties