

Are you a procrastinator? Then read this. Now!

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(HealthDay)—Do you put off until tomorrow things you should do

today? Or tell yourself that you work better "under pressure"?

If you're a procrastinator, you're probably a master at making excuses rather than making plans to get the job done.

A study done at the Universities of Southern California and Michigan found that putting an end to procrastination is as simple as changing your time frame to make the task seem more imminent.

For instance, saving for your child's [college education](#) or your own retirement is easy to put off if you see it as years away. But if you give yourself a shorter deadline—months rather than years—you're more likely to start that nest egg now. Researchers say this approach helps you feel more connected to the goal.

You can apply this simple shift in deadline to any task, such as a [work](#) presentation due in two weeks or a tag sale you have planned for next month. Change the due date to this week and you'll be more motivated to get started.

Another key is gaining self-awareness. Ask yourself what you're trying to avoid and why. Some people procrastinate because they're afraid of failing and might benefit from getting outside help. There are even classes that teach you how to overcome procrastination.

If you simply feel overwhelmed by the size of a project, break it down into small sections with staggered deadlines. Just make sure the first deadline is within a few days.

Try this no-more-procrastination plan—and put it in writing:

- Break the [task](#) into small steps.
- Assign a deadline to each step; make the first one immediate.

- Plan your schedule around meeting this timeline—don't be distracted by lesser projects or chores.
- Reward yourself as you reach each milestone.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Keep your eye on the prize—what you'll gain when the work is completed.

Above all, stay focused on your master plan. And don't use other, less-important tasks to distract you.

More information: The Harvard Business Review has a [5-step plan](#) to help you overcome procrastination.

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