



# Procrastination – and how to counter it

## Several aspects come together in the behaviour of procrastination:

- The moment of actually starting the learning or task is delayed.
- There is a discrepancy between the intention to learn and the actual behaviour.
- The postponed work is perceived as aversive.
- The person prefers to pursue other activities that can be completed more quickly and are less anxiety-ridden.
- Feelings such as anxiety, shame, loss of control or paralysis set in.

## The reasons for procrastinative behaviour can vary:

- **In the personality structure:** procrastination often occurs with other personality traits such as a lack of self-control and a lack of sense of duty. People who tend to follow the expectations of others and therefore get into role conflicts more easily also tend to procrastinate - more so than people who are relatively self-determined.
- **In the situation and due to the framework conditions at the university:** tasks are often perceived as boring because the lecturer has conveyed too little enthusiasm for the subject, or because the task is unclear, or because there is a lack of feedback.
- **Situational fears** also play a major role, such as the fear of failure (i.e. the fear of not living up to one's own expectations, also known as 'perfectionism') and the fear of being judged (i.e. the fear of not living up to the expectations of others).

## How can I counter procrastination?

### Become aware of your own situation:

First of all, it is important that you face up to your procrastinative behaviour and confront it. For example, you can write down a situation in which you are putting off work and ask yourself what the reasons could be. Another option is to talk to someone you trust about it - or seek a conversation with a writing tutor (→ Schreibzentrum).





### **Take concrete measures:**

Draw up a contract with yourself, which you can also put in writing. It should contain the following points:

- **'Start on time'**: set a fixed start time for work at a specific time and place (e.g. 9.00 a.m., ThULB). (A good way to increase commitment is to join a writing group (→ Beate Schuhmann, Psychosoziale Beratungsstelle des Studierendenwerks) or to set up a writing group).
- **'Plan realistically'**: Limit your daily working time (e.g. to 5 h), but also set yourself a specific daily and weekly target (e.g. the outline is finished by the weekend or in the rough draft phase: two pages/day).

### **Reward yourself when you have completed your workload!**

### **Keep yourself accountable:**

Keep a learning diary or logbook alongside your writing project. Start by entering a work plan for the entire project and set a deadline for when you want to be finished (e.g. three working weeks for a term paper). Then divide the work plan into detailed intermediate goals (e.g. finalise the outline, write the rough draft, revise). Also include your other activities (e.g. part-time job, partner and friends, leisure and sport, family).

Also keep a record in your learning diary of what you have achieved in a day and how much time you have actually spent on it. Rate yourself in % how much of what you set out to do you have achieved.

You can also record all the thoughts and feelings that accompany your writing project in the learning diary. Writing things down often has a liberating effect.

