# The Catholic University of America – Study Skills

## Procrastination

If you procrastinate, don’t beat yourself up. It’s actually not a time management or productivity problem -- it’s a problem with the emotions we’re feeling! As Joseph Ferrari, a professor of psychology at DePaul University explains, “To tell the chronic procrastinator to *just do it* would be like saying to a clinically depressed person, *cheer up*.”

Why do we procrastinate, then?

* **Fear of failure:** we worry the outcome won’t be perfect.
* **Impulsiveness:** we get distracted by more fun activities that pop up while we are about to launch.
* **Denial:** we don’t like doing certain things, so we erase them from our mind.
* **Rebelliousness:** when we feel forced to do something, we just fight back and resist.

Bottom line: People avoid doing things more when they are sad or upset — the pleasantness of any distraction helps regulate our feelings.

So...what do we do about it?

First, ask yourself: “*Why* am I avoiding doing something? Why do I hate this task?” Be honest with yourself!

Second, validate the reason you are avoiding the task. It is OK to hate doing something. It is also OK to not feel challenged enough about something. Bottom line: be kind to yourself.

Third, take action by starting very small and setting specific goals. For example:

* Read 1 page of your assignment.
* Find 1 source for your research paper.
* Write 1 page of your paper.

Other ideas can be unique to you! For example: starting with what you enjoy; starting with what you hate; setting goals by time; or setting goals by task.

The important thing is to start small, and just gain some momentum. You can do this!

(Summarized from: <https://liberationist.org/how-to-win-the-emotional-battle-of-procrastination/>)