10 Scientifically Proven Tips for Beating Procrastination

Here are ten tips for overcoming that daunting task you've been avoiding, based on science:​ ​

**1. Pick Your Poison.**

The key to beating procrastination is focus. We often give ourselves too many things to do and become overwhelmed. Start by choosing just ONE thing that you’ve been procrastinating and make a commitment to complete that task in the next week.

**2. Start today.**

Once you’ve narrowed it down to one task, you must take immediate action. Today. If it feels daunting or you don’t think you have enough time to complete the task, do the Five Minute Miracle below.

**3. Five Minute Miracle.**

This is one of the best techniques for people who struggle with procrastination. The Five Minute Miracle involves asking yourself; “Hmm, what action can I take in less than five minutes TODAY that moves this forward even the tiniest bit?” Once you’ve identified a small action, set a timer for five minutes and spend five minutes working on the task. Research shows that once you start something, you’re much more likely to finish it. This is due to a psychological phenomenon called the [Zeigarnik effect](http://www.spring.org.uk/2011/02/the-zeigarnik-effect.php), which says that unfinished tasks are more likely to get stuck in your memory. (This is also why our mind gets stuck in a loop thinking about all the things we haven’t yet completed.) Remember: Small action is still action. Five minutes can make all the difference.

**4.**[**Do a Power Hour**](http://www.forbes.com/sites/vanessaloder/2014/06/11/why-multi-tasking-is-worse-than-marijuana-for-your-iq/#bcf9dd34e51d)**.**

A Power Hour consists of putting away all distractions and working in concentrated chunks of time (to begin with I suggest no more than twenty minute intervals) followed by short periods of rest, in order to harness the optimal performance of your brain and body.

Science has discovered that our brain naturally goes through cycles with peaks and valleys. To maximize your output, it is vital that you honor these peaks and valleys by balancing concentrated, focused time with relaxation and integration.

**5. Kill It With Kindness.**

[Research shows](http://digest.bps.org.uk/2010/05/cure-for-procrastination-forgive.html) that the more you can forgive yourself for past procrastination, the more likely you are to overcome your current procrastination and take action. Practice [self-compassion](http://www.mindfulnessbasedachievement.com/selfcompassiontools) when thinking of your past experience procrastinating.

**6. Have a Procrastination**[**Power Song**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMG0FCJ6dRs)**.**

Pick a song that really gets you energized, and play it whenever you want to tackle something you’ve been procrastinating. The brain likes to have a trigger to create a new habit, plus you’re more likely to follow through when you’re feeling good in your body.

**7. Get under the hood.**

Sometimes, it can be helpful to understand exactly why you’ve been procrastinating a specific task. Are you afraid of something? Maybe you feel overwhelmed and don't know where to start. Fill in the sentence; “I’m avoiding this task because…” or “I’m avoiding this task because I’m afraid that….” And see what shows up. Identifying your fears can help you realize the monsters in the closet aren’t as bad as you think.

**8. Let It Go.**

Most people put way too much on their To Do list. One way to stop procrastinating something is to decide you’re never going to do it. What can you take off your to do list? Try crossing something off your list simply because you realize you don’t really need to do that thing...ever. Give yourself permission to let it go.

**9. Make a bet.**

It can be very helpful to have an accountability buddy. One fun way to take this a step further is to have a bet with your buddy. Choose a day and time within the next week that you will complete this task and then tell your friend or colleague; “I’ll give you $10 / take you out to lunch / buy you coffee / watch that awful movie you’ve been wanting to see / etc. if I haven’t completed this task by next Wednesday at 10:00am.” Give your accountability buddy a date and time within the next week and tell them in order to redeem the agreed upon prize, they must check in with you at that appointed day and time. If you haven’t completed your task by then…you owe them whatever you bet!

**10. Make it fun.**

Another way to motivate yourself to complete a task is to create a reward that you will give yourself once it’s been completed. What can you treat yourself to once you’ve finished this task? [Research shows](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3807793/) the human brain responds to reward stimulus and this can be a good way to create habits.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/vanessaloder/2016/04/15/10-scientifically-proven-tips-for-beating-procrastination/#451f11d0296a>