

C1-C2 English Worksheet

Procrastination and Performance: The Habit Students Struggle With Most

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Article

A study of 65,950 students at 97 US higher-education institutions has put procrastination under unusually close scrutiny. Around 72% reported experiencing it, while 45.4% said it had damaged their academic performance and 45.7% linked it to significant distress. Those figures make it difficult to brush off procrastination as a minor student habit. The research suggests that unnecessary delay is both widespread and consequential, although the survey cannot prove that procrastination alone caused every difficulty students reported.

Psychologists have long argued that procrastination does not simply boil down to poor time management. People often put off a task because it triggers boredom, anxiety, self-doubt or frustration, then turn to an activity that offers immediate emotional relief. That short-term escape can feed into a longer cycle: unfinished work creates pressure, pressure disrupts sleep or concentration, and reduced self-control makes it harder to follow through on plans. Perfectionism can also hold people back when beginning a task feels risky because the result may not meet their own standards.

The findings raise a practical question about how universities, employers and individuals should respond. Telling people to organise themselves better may help, but targeted strategies can home in on the emotional and behavioural barriers behind delay. People can break a project into concrete steps, set aside a short period to begin, reduce distractions and use external accountability. The wider lesson carries over beyond education. Procrastination can affect professional work, household tasks, exercise and personal decisions. To get to grips with it, people may need more than a new calendar: they may need to recognise what discomfort they are trying to avoid and learn to act before that discomfort takes over.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

No.	Statement	T / F
1	The research drew on responses from more than 65,000 students at almost 100 US institutions.	
2	The survey establishes that procrastination directly caused every academic difficulty reported by participants.	
3	Psychologists cited in the article reduce procrastination to a problem of poor scheduling.	
4	Seeking immediate relief from an unpleasant task can contribute to a cycle that makes future action harder.	
5	Perfectionism may delay action when people are worried that their work will not meet their own expectations.	
6	The article argues that targeted support should focus exclusively on calendars and deadlines.	
7	The strategies discussed may also be relevant to work, domestic responsibilities and personal decisions.	
8	External accountability is presented as something that necessarily weakens a person's self-control.	

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. brush off	A. use something as help, relief or an alternative
2. boil down to	B. prevent people from progressing or acting
3. put off	C. have one main cause or explanation
4. turn to	D. start dealing effectively with something difficult
5. feed into	E. complete something that was planned or promised
6. follow through on	F. focus closely on a particular issue or target
7. hold people back	G. dismiss something as unimportant or not serious
8. home in on	H. reserve time or resources for a purpose
9. set aside	I. delay doing something
10. get to grips with	J. contribute to a situation or process

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. scrutiny	A. focused
2. consequential	B. instant
3. frustration	C. answerability
4. immediate	D. significant
5. disrupts	E. specific
6. targeted	F. unease
7. barriers	G. disturbs
8. concrete	H. examination
9. accountability	I. obstacles
10. discomfort	J. exasperation

Use the New Language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Student A	Student B
1. Which tasks are you most inclined to put off, and what usually triggers the delay?	1. Does describing procrastination as emotional regulation rather than poor time management change how it should be addressed?
2. Have you ever followed through on a plan mainly because someone else was holding you accountable?	2. Should universities and employers home in on environmental causes of delay, or is responsibility ultimately individual?
3. Does working under pressure sharpen your focus or undermine it?	3. Can external accountability reduce procrastination without weakening self-discipline?
4. Which digital distractions are hardest for you to set aside?	4. Do productivity apps tackle the problem, or can using them become another form of avoidance?
5. Have you found any method that genuinely helps you get to grips with procrastination?	5. How far do perfectionism, fear of failure and unrealistic expectations feed into procrastination?
6. Does perfectionism ever hold you back from starting or finishing something?	6. Could flexible deadlines reduce distress, or make it easier to put work off?
7. When is delaying a decision sensible rather than procrastination?	7. Should education systems reward steady progress rather than last-minute effort?
8. Do you prefer rigid schedules or flexible deadlines?	8. How should we distinguish legitimate rest from avoidance that becomes harmful?

Answer Key

True/False	1=T, 2=F, 3=F, 4=T, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F
Phrase Match	1=G, 2=C, 3=I, 4=A, 5=J, 6=E, 7=B, 8=F, 9=H, 10=D
Synonym Match	1=H, 2=D, 3=J, 4=B, 5=G, 6=A, 7=I, 8=E, 9=C, 10=F

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	It is easy to brush off procrastination until missed deadlines become a pattern.
2	For some people, the problem may boil down to avoiding uncomfortable emotions.
3	Perfectionists sometimes put off starting because they fear producing imperfect work.
4	When a task feels stressful, people may turn to easier activities for short-term relief.
5	Repeated avoidance can feed into a cycle of stress and poorer concentration.
6	A clear plan makes it easier to follow through on commitments, even when the work is difficult.
7	Fear of failure can hold people back even when they have enough time and ability.
8	Useful support should home in on the reason a person keeps delaying action.
9	I set aside thirty minutes each morning for work that requires deep concentration.
10	To get to grips with procrastination, it helps to notice what feeling you are trying to avoid.