

THE SEVEN STEP ANTI-PROCRASTINATION PLAN

Step One – Make it meaningful. What is important about the job you’ve been putting off? List the benefits of completing it. Look at it in relation to your goals. Be specific about the rewards for getting it done, include how you will feel when you’re done.

Step Two – Take it apart. Break big jobs into a series of small ones you can do in 15 minutes or less. If a long reading assignment intimidates you, divide it into two-page or three-page sections. Make a list of the sections and cross them off as you complete them so you can see your progress.

Step Three – Write it down. If you can’t get started on a term paper, you might write down a plan on a 3x5 card, “I plan to write a list of at least 10 possible topics by 9 p.m. and I will reward myself with an hour of guilt-free television watching.” Carry the card with you or post it where you can see it often.

Step Four – Tell everyone. Announce publicly your plan to get it done. Tell a friend you plan to learn 10 irregular French verbs by Saturday. Tell your spouse, roommate, parents, and children. Include anyone who will ask whether you’ve completed it or who will suggest ways to get it done. Make the world your support group.

Step Five – Find a reward. Construct rewards carefully. Be willing to withhold them if you do not complete the task. Don’t pick a movie as a reward for studying biology if you plan to go to the movie anyway. And when you legitimately reap your reward, notice how it feels.

Step Six – Do it now. The minute you notice yourself procrastinating, plunge into the task. Imagine yourself at a mountain lake, poised to dive. Gradual immersion would be slow torture. It’s often less painful to leap. Then be sure to savor the feeling of having the task behind you.

Step Seven – Just say no. When you keep pushing a task into the low-priority category, re-examine the purpose for doing it at all. If you realize you really don’t intend to do something, quit telling yourself that you will. Just say NO! Then you’re not procrastinating, and you don’t have to carry around the baggage of an undone task.