

Get That Assignment Done!

You want to do well in your courses. You have worked out all your schedules. You attend all your classes. You have a place to study that works for you. Now you are staring at that big project that you need to get started on, but you can't figure out where to begin, and your anxiety is rising. Does this sound familiar? You are not alone – this is a situation facing many students. The feeling of paralysis and being unable to follow through is sometimes called procrastination, but it does not have to take over.

Try some of the techniques below.

Consider your Anxiety as Excitement

In your academic studies you will always be facing new ideas, new challenges, and trying to do what you have never done before. It is perfectly natural to feel uneasy about these new things. Consider that anxiety is a form of excitement (which it is). Think about a challenge that you have faced and remember the exhilaration of achieving success. Build on your past successes, take a deep breath, and move forward.

Set Your Goal(s)

The first and most self-motivating action step is to decide what you want from each project. Do you have a grade goal? Is this a group or team project with marks attached to how well you work together? Consider what you will gain from the assignment and how your competence will improve. Where does this assignment fit into the larger picture of what you are aiming for? Imagine a future where you look back on this successful project. By focusing on what you want and need, you direct your energies and self-motivation to get things done for you. Create a SMART Goal for your project (see next page for a goal setting worksheet).

Analyze the Assignment

Pull out your assignment sheet and start to identify the keywords and items that the Instructor wants. Make a list of them down the left hand side of a document. To the right of each item, list the criteria for successfully achieving it. This creates a rubric that you can use as you work to check off the elements that you have completed as you progress. You now have a clear idea about what is needed and it is no longer a black box.

Break the Project into Chunks

Group the tasks into chunks that fit together. A large project might have ten or more them. You will often start with an outline, then do research, then compare information, and so on. There will be a conclusion and/or recommendations at the end. Other items, such as graphics, will be there depending on the assignment. Each chunk should be seen by you as a piece that is small enough to complete successfully.

Create a Timeline

Order the tasks in a logical sequence and assign times to get them done. Research is early in your schedule. Conclusions will come near the end. You now have a written plan that you can refer to as you go along.

Do One Thing at a Time

Pick the first item and get started. Get excited about doing it. Enjoy the positive sensation of having it done and checked it off your list. If you still feel overwhelmed, go back two steps, break this task into smaller pieces, and do the chunks one at a time. You want to see yourself doing each step and succeeding in getting it done.

Take Regular Breaks

Build break time into your studies. Take 10 minutes off to do something you want to do every hour. After three hours stop for a longer break that might include a snack or a meal. After six hours, put your studies aside until tomorrow. This helps you keep up your positive excitement about the parts that you are doing.

Review Your Progress

At the end of each piece of the project that you complete, sit back and review your plan to see how much you have done. Adjust times as necessary. Remember your personal goals for the project and keep at it!

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Set Your Goal(s) for Your Assignment

Name of the Assignment:

Course:

Due Date:

Key Goals of the Assignment using the SMART acronym:

Specific – What deliverables will you create for the instructor, which parts will gain you marks.

Measurable – How the project will be assessed

Attainable – What steps will you take to create the project deliverables?

Relevant – How will you use the list of deliverable to guide your research and creation?

Timely – Lay out a realistic timeline to get your project done! List each “chunk” and when you will do it.

Do One Thing at a Time

Start to work step by step. Check off items as you are finished with each action step.

Review Your Progress

Adjust your plan as necessary.

For more strategies see: <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~koconne1/605TheAdultLearner/obstacles.htm>



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