

- GUIDEBOOK -

# HOW TO FIGHT PROCRASTINATION

The spark you need to start  
taking control of your life



This guidebook will give you the jumpstart you need to finally take steps towards cutting down the time you spend procrastinating.

You will get to know **the procrastination equation** and **figure out practical steps** that you can take right now.

Complete these steps in order to:

- **Become more productive**
- **Reduce stress**
- **Have more time for your loved ones**

Think of this guide as the spark you need to start taking control of your life.



## About Us

We are Martin and Ula. Creators of Habits Mastery and the #BeABitBetter movement!

We share our knowledge and experience in the areas of habits, personal development, and design thinking. We help to design and introduce changes, and thus become a bit better and achieve goals. We take great joy and pleasure from seeing our clients' development and change in their and others' lives for the better.



*"I've been a Certified Tiny Habits® Coach since 2014. I help to break big intentions into tiny habits, so that you can improve constantly, without depending on motivation and willpower. I enjoy making people think tiny and surprising them how easy it can be to make some little but useful changes and create practical habits."*

- Martin Mark

*"I'm a Training & Development Specialist. I design and lead projects, workshops, and training courses about self-development. I'm also a Design Thinking Trainer. I consider myself as the undaunted optimist, looking for good sides in every situation - according to the principle that "nothing happens without a reason". I like to create and observe changes in people and the world around me."*



- Urszula Malinska-Mark

Follow us:



[www.HabitsMastery.com](http://www.HabitsMastery.com)

We all procrastinate from time to time. Some of us occasionally, others more often. According to studies around 25% of adults and 50-70% of students consider themselves to be constant procrastinators.

In one survey, 94% of people indicated that procrastination has a negative effect on their happiness. Postponing the work tasks can lead to problems in family life and also the other way around. It can cause stress, anxiety, relationship issues, health problems, financial concerns and so on.

Even if the effects of procrastination are not so visible in your life, I'm quite sure you would benefit from having this issue under control. But from where to start and how not to procrastinate on this?

We need to become self-aware, to have clarity and avoid overwhelming ourselves. We need to keep things as simple as possible so that it is easy to take action. When we know exactly what we need to do, we are aware of the possible obstacles that can appear and we have a strategy on how to overcome our obstructions, it becomes a lot easier to take action.

This guide will show you how to do it in 3 easy steps

**Step 1: Choose one task or situation when you usually procrastinate**

**Step 2: Figure out what kind of demotivating or hindering factors you have and how to relieve them**

**Step 3: Figure out how to get more motivation and self-control**

**Promise yourself that you will not procrastinate on this and start following the steps right NOW!** (If not possible at the moment then at least schedule 20 minutes for this in the next few days and write it to your calendar!)

# Let's start!

It's Monday. A perfect time to make a new beginning and finally start working on your big project that you have procrastinated on. You are rested, you feel good, you open your laptop and start working.

But wait, there is also an important email that your co-worker was supposed to answer by Monday morning. Let's check it to have more information to start the project.

There is no answer yet, but instead you see an interesting email about a big sale coming in your favorite online shop. It's only for a limited time, so let's make sure you don't miss any great deal.

Some clicks in the online shop. Then you are directed to Facebook. There you see notifications. You wish happy birthday to your friend's acquaintance's mother-in-law. You notice a cool video and end up on YouTube.

Then your friend is calling to ask about your weekend. Then a co-worker wants some help with his task. Then you feel hungry and go take a snack. Then you notice that the trash bin is full and you take it out. Then you meet a neighbor and have a chat. Then you finally remember about your big project and decide to start with it.

But somehow it is so complicated that you have no idea what you should begin with. Then you are invited to have lunch and you decide that anyway you can't work with an empty stomach. You will start after lunch.

Coming back, there are the next distractions, obstacles, attention grabbers and so on. You procrastinate and procrastinate and finally you are getting stressed and overwhelmed and anxious and what not.

Sounds familiar? In one or another way we have all been there – postponing the important tasks. But why does it happen?

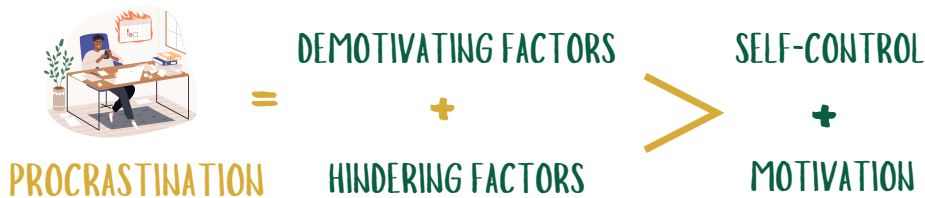
## The procrastination equation

When we need to get something done, we rely on our **self-control** to make us take action. Self-control is like a competition in ourselves between impulsivity and doing what's right or beneficial. It's the ability to control emotions, impulses or behaviors to achieve a greater goal.

Self-control is supported by our **motivation** – expectation of receiving some reward for our efforts. If we completely lack motivation to do a task, nothing happens. Depending on the complexity of the task, we might get away only with a bit of motivation, when the assignment is easy enough.

Quite often we also experience some **demotivating factors**. We might have fear of failure, the task could be unpleasant or we just feel overwhelmed. Besides there can be some other **hindering factors** like exhaustion, perfectionism or distraction.

Shortly said, **when demotivating and hindering factors outweigh self-control and motivation we are going to procrastinate.**



# What can be done to avoid postponing our tasks?

As we see from the simple equation, we have to make sure that the combination of demotivating and hindering factors is lower than our self-control and motivation.

Like always, if we want to start making some changes, **we have to become aware of the situation**. In this case we need self-awareness and your understanding about the reasons why you procrastinate. And on what tasks and in what situations you procrastinate.

The factors that affect you are likely different by the tasks you have to do. For example, you are postponing writing the report because of some reasons and going to the gym for other reasons. Although they both can also happen for instance because of your exhaustion.



## Step 1: Choose one task or situation when you usually procrastinate

In order to change something we have to become aware of the situation. We have to know when this problem is usually appearing.

What are the tasks that you usually postpone?

Do you procrastinate on work assignments or on personal duties?

Do you postpone working on your big important goals or small insignificant tasks?

What are the situations when you feel like procrastinating?

### **For example:**

*I procrastinate in the morning at work.*

*I procrastinate on writing the project reports.*

**Write your answers and choose one task or situation that is the most important to you at the moment:**



# Why we procrastinate?

Do you know why YOU procrastinate? What are the factors and reasons why YOU postpone the important tasks? We all have our own reasons depending on our situation, experience and environment.

Here are some different factors that are quite common reasons for procrastination and some suggestions how to relieve them. Not all of them might be relevant for you and you can just skim through them. Hopefully you will get some inspiration to figure out your obstacles and get some encouragement to create a few good habits that help you.

## - Distractions

Is your focus constantly shifting between different tasks? Are there distracting noises? Do you see something that makes you lose your concentration? Do you smell something, feel something? Are there other people who come to disturb you?

Distractions have a big influence on you. They make you lose focus and you can find yourself doing something totally different than the important task that you are supposed to work on.

**Observe yourself and determine the distractions that are usually appearing for you.** See if you can remove them or at least make them appear less frequently. Create habits that remove some of the distractions or decide beforehand how you will behave when a distraction appears.

## - Abstract goals

Do you know what exactly you should do? Is the task clear for you? Do you know how to reach the end-result?

If the task at hand is too broad or you don't know exactly how to get started, then quite often you tend to procrastinate. The big project can be intimidating and confusing.

**Make sure your goals and tasks are as specific and clear as possible.** The more concrete the assignment the easier it is to get started. Divide the bigger projects into subtasks and plan the time when you will be doing them.

Instead of writing "finish the report", note down "On Monday from nine to ten I will work on the x paragraph of the report"

## - Unpleasant tasks

Is the task at hand something that you really don't like to do? Something that is uncomfortable for you or even makes you feel bad? Sometimes it happens, but you still have to do it.

**Try to make the task more enjoyable and find aspects of it that you can care about.** Change your perspective and create your own reasons for doing this task.

Maybe it is a good experience for you, maybe you learn something new, maybe you grow your willpower muscle, maybe you can share the task with somebody, maybe you can find a new and fun way to do it. Be creative.

If possible, connect it with some other task that you enjoy doing. Do the workout while watching your favorite series. Go to a cozy coffee shop, have your favorite drink and write the boring report there. Make it a competition with your coworker – who can finish more boring tasks in one day?

## - Perfectionism

Are you occasionally wondering, what if the result will not be as good as you want? What if your colleague or competitor does a better job? What if the outcome will not be the best in the world?

Sometimes we just want to do it perfectly and since we know it is not possible, we better not start at all. Then it at least still has the potential to be perfect when you start working on it in the future.

**You can try to avoid a perfectionist mindset by accepting that your work will have some flaws.** It is totally normal. Everybody is making some mistakes and you can't be the best in the world in everything. There is always somebody who can do it better. It doesn't matter, don't compare yourself with others. Do your best and it is enough!

## - Short-term thinking

Do you prefer to do things that result in instant gratification? And postpone activities that would cause you some immediate discomfort? Although you are aware that in the long run, you could enjoy the results of the effort.

This is very natural for all of us. Our brain works like this. It seeks pleasure and avoids pain. This means that we tend to postpone difficult tasks and choose to do something easy and fun instead.

**Try to become aware of the consequences of not doing the important but difficult task now.** Think about the future self. Think about how good you will feel if this task is done on time and how bad you will feel if you have to work on it the whole night before the deadline. The future you will be very thankful for your good decisions.

## - Lack of energy

Do you feel physical fatigue? Do you have a lack of sleep or exercise? Do you have unhealthy eating habits?

If you are not physically and mentally fit, it is very easy to postpone tasks. So maybe the way to start fighting with procrastination is through your eating and sleeping habits?

**What could you do to be more fit in every way?** Drink more water? Stretch during breaks? Have a healthy breakfast? What one tiny action could you add to your day to become more fit?

## - Overwhelming

Do you feel that there is just so much to do that you can't manage? Do you have a really big and difficult task at hand and you don't know how to handle it? Do you feel overwhelmed with everything that is going on?

There can be different reasons why you ended up in this situation. Maybe you don't know how to say "no!"? Maybe you are not used to asking for help? Maybe you need to learn some new skills to be more efficient?

Whatever the case, **try to stay calm and untangle this situation one knot at the time.** Start from the smallest and easiest knot. From something that you can do right now, that doesn't take a lot of effort.

Maybe you can make a list of everything that you have to do and get clear on the exact steps that you need to take. Maybe there is someone who you can ask help from. Maybe you just need to relax and take some time off. Maybe even a nap will help.

## - Fear of failure

Have you had doubts whether you can manage to do the task? What if you fail and all the colleagues will laugh at you, your boss will be mad and you might even lose your job? What if you decide to go to the gym, but are not able to lift as much as others are doing or drop the weights?

Fear of failure can be connected to perfectionism, but in this case you are afraid that you can't do it at all. If you have low self-confidence or low self-esteem, you are more likely to procrastinate.

### **Focus on what you can control and learn from your mistakes.**

Often the things we worry about are out of our hands and you can't change them anyway. Figure out if your fear is rational at all.

Also make it a habit to learn from your own and from other people's mistakes. When something goes wrong, take some time to reflect on it and make a plan for the next time this situation arises. What will you do differently? If you have a plan ready, you are more confident.



## Step 2: Figure out what kind of demotivating or hindering factors you have and how to relieve them

Keep in mind these tasks or situations that you chose in step 1. Why do you procrastinate on them? Choose the reasons from the list above or add your own reasons.

There can be a lot of different factors and combinations of them. Also they don't have to be the same all the time. On some days there can be one distraction, on other days some new obstacles. To relieve them, you create habits, that are based on your daily activities.

### **For example:**

#### **The reason why I procrastinate:**

*I have a lot of distractions during my work time*

#### **How to relieve this reason:**

*After opening the laptop in the morning, I will silence my phone and put it into the drawer.*

*After I start working on writing the report, I will tell my co-worker not to disturb me during the next hour.*

*After someone asks for help during my focus time, I will tell them to come back later.*



#### **The reason why I procrastinate:**

*I don't like this task that I have to do*

#### **How to relieve this reason:**

*After I write an unpleasant task on the to-do list, I will think about why it is important to do it*

*After I receive a difficult task, I will think how to make it easier and more fun*

*After I feel bored with a task, I will tell myself: "The faster I do it the better"*

**Choose your 3 biggest reasons of procrastination, write them down and create your recipes to relieve them:**

***The reason why I procrastinate:***

***How to relieve this reason:***

\* \* \*

***The reason why I procrastinate:***

***How to relieve this reason:***

\* \* \*

***The reason why I procrastinate:***

***How to relieve this reason:***

# Motivation and self-control

The second way how to make the procrastination equation work in your favor, is to increase your motivation and self-control.

When you have a lot of interest and reasons to complete the task and you have enough discipline, the demotivating and hindering factors don't play so big role.

## - Lack of motivation

Do you lack interest in the task? Do you have no wish to do it? Do you feel unmotivated?

As you remember from the procrastination equation, you need to have enough motivation to outweigh the hindering and demotivating factors.

Motivation is also one of the main components in the Fogg Behavior Model\* that says – if you don't have any motivation at all or the motivation is not enough in correlation to your ability to do the task – you will not do it.

So you have two options – you have to raise your motivation or you have to make the task so easy that your current motivation is enough to do it.

**Start from making the task easier and then find ways to motivate yourself.** You can use subtasks, delegate a part of the task, make it more concrete and clear, make some preparations or learn something new that helps to do it. If this is not enough, figure out what would motivate you to do it.

\* Developed by Stanford behavior scientist BJ Fogg, PhD  
(the author of the Tiny Habits® method)



## - Lack of self-control

Do you find yourself often scrolling social media, cleaning your desktop, reading news, browsing online shops or doing some other easy replacement activities instead of working on your important assignment?

Self-control reflects a person's ability to self-regulate their behavior in order to bring themselves to follow through on their intentions, and take action that is in their best interest, particularly in the long-term.

Lack of self-control often leads to procrastinating. You will start doing things that you don't need to do while saying to yourself that you will start working in just a couple of minutes. I will just finish this article, I will just watch one more video, I will just scroll to the end of the Facebook feed.

There is a method called HALT. The letters mean hunger, anger, loneliness, and tiredness. It is said that when you have any of these, it is not a good time to make decisions. They will affect you and you are not able to be rational. They will also influence your decisions about delaying the tasks because you lack self-control.

**So if you are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, it means that you are more likely to procrastinate.** When you start working on important tasks, make sure you don't have any of those feelings. Have a good night's sleep, eat a good breakfast, try to avoid any situations that make you angry or lonely.

## Step 3: Figure out how to get more motivation and self-control

Depending on the task, you may lack motivation or self-control. It's not always the same. Take a look again at step 1. Think for a moment about what concrete steps you can take to be more motivated or have more self-control in doing them. Use habits ideas to create solutions.

### **For example:**

*After I feel unmotivated about a task, I will figure out the first tiny step that I could do*

*After I get frustrated about a task, I will ask advice from a friend or colleague*

*After I sit behind the work desk, I will look at the photo of my partner/children/family/loved ones and remind myself that I'm doing it also for them*

*After I notice myself feeling angry, I will take 10 deep breaths*

*After I get ready to go to work, I will put a bag of nuts into my pocket*

*After I go to bed, I will start the sleep tracking app*

### **Write your answers:**

# Congratulations!

If you did finish all the steps you are ready to kick your procrastination habit. You have started the progress and this is most important. **You are already a bit better and you can be proud about yourself!**

(If you procrastinated on these tasks, go back and do them immediately! It can have a big impact on your life, so you have no excuses for not doing these easy assignments.)

Of course this is just the very beginning and it might happen that your plan needs improving. While implementing the strategies, you can discover new obstacles. This is not to discourage you, but to tell you that this is totally normal.

Think about yourself as a scientist who is trying to find a solution for a problem. You will have a hypothesis about the reasons for your procrastination and about the strategies that might work to stop postponing tasks. You will test it and figure out if it worked or not. If not, then you tweak your strategies and try again.



# How to succeed for sure?

We know that kicking the procrastination habit can be difficult, especially when you have no experience in habit creation.

The best way to fight procrastination, is to start creating new helpful habits and get rid of the bad ones.

In this guide you figured out ways to relieve the reasons why you procrastinate. This is the first step. Now you should design these ways into good and helpful habits, so that they would come automatically for you.

There are a lot of different methods and myths out there about habit creation. One method that is based on science and that we have found to be quite fool proof is the **Tiny Habits® method**.

Martin is a Certified Tiny Habits Coach since 2014 and has helped hundreds of people to create new habits in different fields of life. Now we have put together a special **program that focuses on procrastination: 5 Steps to Kick the Procrastination Habit**

It is a **hands-on 2-weeks 1:1 coaching program** where you will implement your new habits every day and have daily support from Martin. This way you can get immediate feedback and speed up your success without making unnecessary mistakes.

So if you really want to kick the procrastination habit to have less stress and more time for your loved ones, let us help you to create new useful habits for anti-procrastination in just 2 weeks.

**I WANT TO KICK THE  
PROCRASTINATION HABIT**



[www.HabitsMastery.com](http://www.HabitsMastery.com)

© HABITSMASTERY, 2022

**HabitsMastery**