

# Tips

## For Dealing With Procrastinators In Academic Settings

### 1. Provide clear task descriptions!

Unambiguous instructions enable students to understand exactly what is expected. So talk to your students about their projects following these questions:

- a. What has to be done?
- b. Until when?
- c. What is the first step?
- d. What could be subgoals?

Students who procrastinate often overestimate the time left and underestimate the difficulties. Talk about that and encourage students to plan realistically.

### 2. Encourage realistic time schedules with enough buffer time!

The 'Unschedule Method' by Neil Fiore can be a successful approach for procrastinators. The goal of the Unschedule is guarantee your guilt-free play and legitimize your personal time. Here's a summary, based on Neil Fiore's instructions, on how to make and use your own Unschedule:

- a. Schedule only non-work activities in the first step  
This includes:
  - Previously committed time such as meals, sleep, meetings
  - Free time, recreation, leisure reading
  - Socializing, lunches, and dinners with friends
  - Health activities like going to the gym
  - Routine events such as commuting, classes, appointments
- b. Fill in your Unschedule with work on projects after you have planned your free time.
- c. When planning your work, take only those tasks into account which require at least thirty minutes of uninterrupted work.
- d. Schedule at least one full day for fun and small chores.

### 3. Specify minor steps!

- a. Specify subsections of a task and describe minor steps that need to be done on the way. It is also very helpful to give intermediate deadlines for these parts.
- b. Example:
  - i. Do a literature research about [topic] until [date].
  - ii. Write a summary of each of the five most important articles until [date].
  - iii. Present an outline of your homework to your instructor/to the class on [date].
  - iv. Write your homework until [date].

### 4. Provide specific and useful feedback!

Use the following questions to structure your feedback with regards to content and planning behavior.

- a. What went well? It is important to provide positive feedback!
- b. What can be improved?

### 5. Motivate!

- a. When possible, choose tasks that are connected to the student's interest. Furthermore, use tasks requiring skills and producing outcomes that students can transfer into their future professional life. It is obvious that positive emotions felt by students, connected to interesting and relevant tasks, influence the degree of procrastination.

### 6. Seek the conversation with your students!

Don't fear that you are nagging students by reminding them of impending deadlines! Students indicated that they like it when instructors set clear norms and remind them of their expectations.

### 7. Do not forget to praise the progress of the students!

Think about extra points for starting early or encouraging comments on work in progress.