

How to Stop Procrastinating at Work

By [REBECCA THORMAN](#)

August 2, 2012 [RSS](#) [Feed](#) [Print](#)



[Rebecca Thorman](#)

It happens to the best of us. You get an assignment you're not thrilled about, or have an ongoing task that is less than exciting. And so the task slips then slides all the way to the bottom of your to-do list.

Here's how to [stay productive](#) in the face of procrastination when all you really want to do is browse Facebook:

1. **Get clarification.** Don't delay action just because you're missing information. Get clear on exactly what you're supposed to do. Figure out the desired end result and whether there are preferred formats or processes you should use to get there.
2. **Write out each step.** If you had to delegate your least favorite task, how would you explain it? Write out each step for your imaginary assistant in detail. Either you'll tire of writing out the steps and complete the task, or, once the directions are finished, the task will seem more manageable.
3. **Find meaning.** How does your task fit into the larger goals of the organization? If you don't know, [ask your boss](#) to describe the ways in which your work provides value. Knowing the "why" behind the "what" often makes mundane priorities easier to stomach.
4. **Do the worst first.** Try doing your least preferred activities at the start of each day and at the beginning of each week. Getting tasks done right away will give you a sense of relief and achievement, and will take the pressure off the rest of your workload.
5. **Or, try the easiest.** If you really can't move forward on a difficult priority, try going against conventional wisdom and do the easy tasks first. The momentum you'll gain by crossing things off your list will give you confidence to tackle the hard task.
6. **Set a repetitive schedule.** When you repeat something at the same time on the same day week after week, it will become habit. Your mind won't have a chance to procrastinate what is ingrained in your calendar. Remember, if it's not scheduled, it's not real.
7. **Leave for lunch.** Working too much is counter-productive and breeds resentment. [Take a break](#) and enjoy a view of the world that's not blocked by your computer screen. Even a 15-minute walk down your stairwell and back can give you enough energy to get motivated.
8. **Vent to an empathetic ear.** A quick "Ah, this sucks!" to your girlfriend via email can allow you to let go of the negative energy blocking you from completing a task. Just make sure you're not complaining to the people in your office.
9. **Work with others.** When you work alone, it can allow you to put your head down and get work done, but it can also be isolating. If you need to mix things up, try heading to the conference room with a couple colleagues and encourage each other to get things done.

10. **Block distractions.** Don't make it easy on yourself to lose focus. Use software to block yourself from visiting certain websites. Try noise-cancelling headphones if your colleague starts talking too loud. When you get rid of distractions, you get rid of excuses.

These 10 tips will move those dull and difficult priorities from past-due to complete. Share what works for you to stop procrastination in the comments below.

Rebecca Thorman's goal is to help you find meaningful work, enjoy the heck out of it, and earn more money. Her blog [Kontrary](#) offers career, business, and life advice that works. She writes from Washington, D.C.