

# How to stop procrastinating - right now!

10 easy ways to get past your  
paralysis and take action

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## 10 easy ways to get past your paralysis and take action

The negative committee has taken up residence in your head, and their most powerful weapon is procrastination. We feel incompetent, shameful, paralysed, unable to act.

Want to know how to disarm the negative committee and become the most productive you've ever been?

I'm a lifelong procrastinator, and I share some strategies that have helped me. I also talked to other serial procrastinators, including some who have ADHD and executive dysfunction, and these are things that worked for them too.

These simple ideas will get you started, and will chip away at your procrastination habit. I've put ones that I think are easiest to implement first, because sometimes you just need to do one thing

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## 1. Start a success spiral – do one small thing, a first step. Note that you did it.

It can be hard when your mood is low for whatever reason, to motivate yourself to do something towards your goals. Feeling low, as if we have no control over our lives leads to stress, anxiety, irritation with those around us, with ourselves. It creates a downward spiral. We're not coping, so we feel bad, which means we cope even worse, which makes us feel even worse. The negative committee seems to have taken up permanent residence inside your head. Somehow, you have to get out of this downward spiral, and create a success spiral instead. This is both difficult to do and simple to do at the same time. The first step is the hardest, so make it something small.



Go for the quick win. Choose something doable, something that you know you can achieve and will feel good about doing. Maybe it is as simple as washing the dishes, making the bed, doing a five minute tidy of one area of your home. Maybe it is as simple as making

one phone call you know you need to do. Or even just looking up the phone number. Maybe it is just writing a list of the most important things you have to do. Maybe it is go for a walk for the exercise. If any of these seem too hard to do, choose something else that isn't.

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## 2. Book a Focusmate session

This is my favourite productivity tool ever. When I found it, I described it as the cure for procrastination. It certainly seems to have had that effect for me, a lifelong procrastinator and I've spoken to a few Focusmate users, people who have overcome extremely crippling cases of procrastination, sometimes just by finding Focusmate it seems. Although they may have other tools that help them too. You choose a time to work, and Focusmate pairs you with an accountability partner for a live, virtual coworking session that will keep you on task. Each session lasts 50 minutes. Give it a try, free for three sessions a week, \$5 a month for unlimited sessions. [Focusmate.com](https://www.focusmate.com)

## 3. Cultivate your curiosity – explore why you're resisting starting the task

Your mood is affected with you feeling like you can't be bothered; 'I'm not in the right frame of mind right now to work on that report my boss is waiting for, I'll just check my emails first'. Which adds to the downward spiral we covered just now. So being a little curious about what is making you feel low, observing and paying attention to your emotions, can lead to you choosing a different strategy instead of procrastination. If the emotions are task specific, if you can identify whether it's because you feel the task is too boring, or too hard, or you're afraid of not doing a good enough job, you can choose an appropriate strategy to deal with the problem. If it's too boring, just do five minutes, make a game of it, set a timer and see how much you can get done in five minutes. If it's too hard, just do the next action. If you're faffing and feel you can't focus, book a Focusmate session and tell your partner what you'll be focusing on for the session.

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## 4. Next action – what's the next thing you need to do? Just do that

Sometimes, thinking about the whole task can be overwhelming, and lead to more procrastination, so can be counterproductive. Literally, just decide what is the very next thing, just the one next step. If you're procrastinating on a big task at home, maybe, like a new kitchen or bathroom, what's your first step? Is it to get some quotes? Research who you're going to get in for quotes? The first step could just be to find the phone number of one company you're going to ask for quotes. Take the first step. If you find you find yourself thinking you may as well give them a call now you've found the number, there you go.

## 5. Spend five minutes on the task

A close relation to the next thing strategy, you can commit to just five minutes. In the same way, you often find that now you've got started, you'll carry on much longer than the five minutes. If, after five minutes you've had enough, then you met your commitment, so it's fine. No pressure to continue, you clocked up a small win, a success.

Your brain registers it as a success, because the commitment was five minutes. And it's just five minutes right? No matter how hard the task, how much you are resisting starting on it, five minutes out of your life is so non threatening, you can do that. And you'll be surprised how much you can achieve in five minutes.



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## 6. Create a target on stick

This is more of a longer term strategy. It's a website where you make your public commitment; mine was to exercise three times a week for eight weeks. You can appoint a referee to check you're doing what you said you'd do. You can impose a penalty on yourself for not achieving your target. The penalty can be a fine, paid to a cause you do not support. So if I pledged a donation to the Conservative Party if I failed on my commitment, they'd benefit from my failure. Believe me, that would be absolutely enough to make me do whatever I'd committed to. The penalty is automated; if you don't report that you achieved your target, or your referee reports that you failed, the penalty payment is taken by the site. So a bit of pre commitment helps you stay on target

[stickk.com](http://stickk.com)

## 7. Download an internet blocker

Many recovering procrastinators use internet blockers, and there are several types – for your phone, for your computer, completely blocking access, or allowing time limited access. Things like Forest, Rescue Time, StayFocusd, there's loads of them. Google it to find one that works for you, many have free versions.

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## 8. Delete Facebook and Instagram and other social media apps of procrastination choice off your phone



Or move them from the front home page of your phone. This may be enough for some people. Put them all in a folder on the last page of your apps. Be realistic though. If it's not enough of a deterrent, consider deleting them. Log off, so that even on your browser you'll need to log back on – it's just another step that slows you down and makes you consider if you really want to go on there.

## 9. Be kind to yourself – write yourself a compassionate letter

Sometimes the negative committee gets in your head so much that you feel too depressed to take action. Write a compassionate letter to yourself. You'll get the benefits of writing, creating new helpful neural pathways that can help you change your thinking, and at the same time deal with some emotions that are affecting your mental health. This website has a helpful structure to take you through the process.

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self\\_compassionate\\_letter](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self_compassionate_letter)



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## 10. Visualise what you want to achieve, what will your future life be like if you achieve your dreams?

Then contrast that mentally with where you are now. Notice the difference and how that makes you feel. Some people advocate putting yourself in your future shoes. Think about how you'll feel if you skive today, and have to work on it all tomorrow? As a lifelong procrastinator, I don't personally find this helpful, but there is science to suggest it works for some. Like visualisation, I don't really feel it. Logically, I understand it, but it doesn't result in moving me to action.



One way to tweak this that can make it more helpful is to mentally contrast where we want to be with where we are now. This extra step results in the dissatisfaction of our current position, and does move people into action.

People who practice mental contrasting almost immediately start working on pursuing their dreams. Research shows that using the first part alone, visualising your future results in no action at all, and is even worse than if you hadn't visualised. It merely creates a fantasy life. So, if you're a fan of visualisation as a technique, don't forget to add in the next step of contrasting your current position, and that will galvanise you into action.

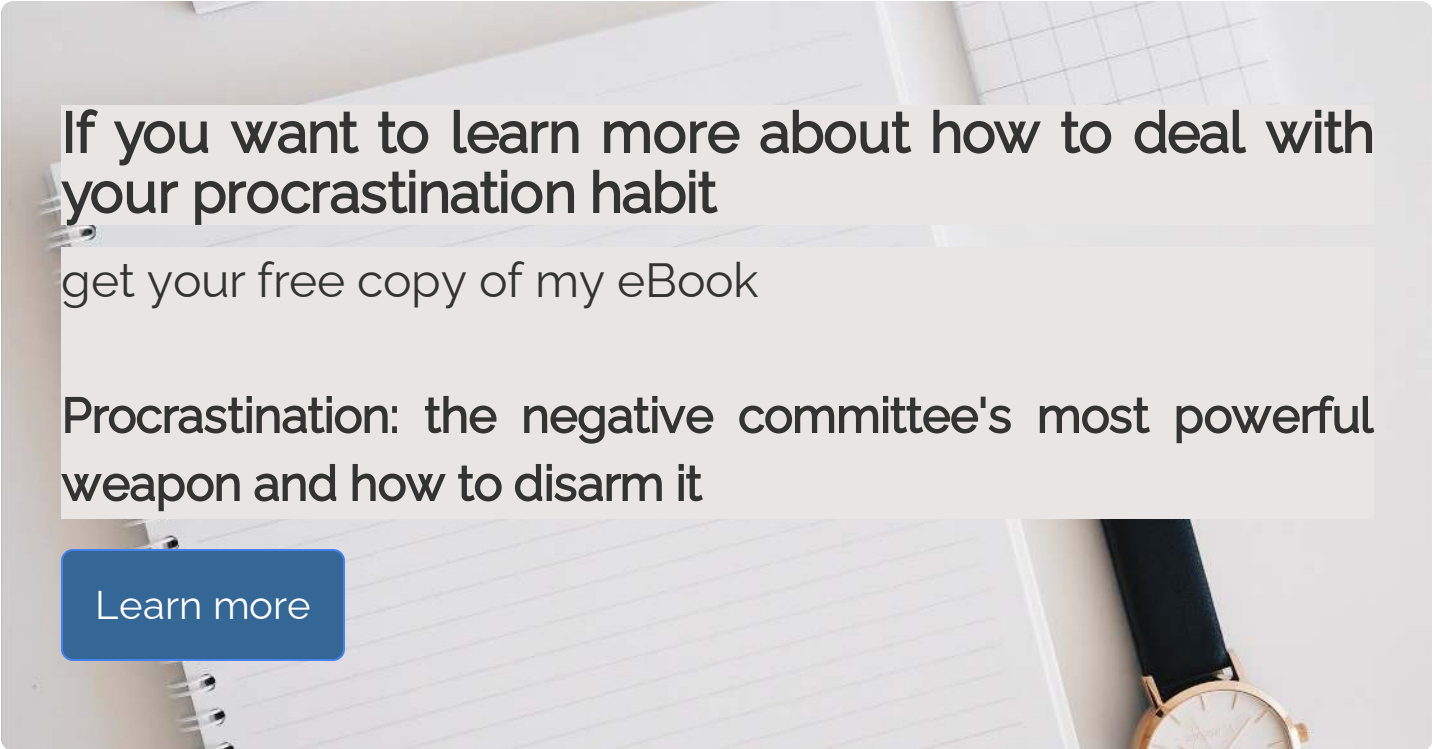


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## 11. Bonus tip – 3-2-1 Go

I'd never come across this one, until a recent twitter conversation about procrastination. It originated with a Mel Robbins video. When you're considering a task but not making a move, just say 3-2-1 Go. According to Dean @twiggerstorm, it's surprisingly effective. It's about breaking the habit of avoiding the task, and once we've started, 80% of us will keep going. Which bears out strategies 1, 4 and 5 above

[Mel Robbins](#)



**If you want to learn more about how to deal with your procrastination habit**

get your free copy of my eBook

**Procrastination: the negative committee's most powerful weapon and how to disarm it**

[Learn more](#)