There are many reasons we procrastinate. One common reason is fear – either of failure or success. We may avoid tasks in belief that we cannot complete them successfully. Putting the work off prevents us from confronting any possible difficulties that we may have to encounter. We may also procrastinate to put off success because we want to avoid added scrutiny, responsibility, choices, envy, or resentment from peers. Sometimes, procrastination comes down to poor organization and time management. It can also stem from impulse control issues – we often struggle with the temptation of checking our Facebook notifications or watching one more hour of Netflix. Additionally, procrastination can stem from personal problems, such as issues with finances, family, friends, or romantic relationships. Various issues may cause us to be more susceptible to distracting activities. So what can we do? There are several techniques you can use to break through the wall of procrastination! The advice in this handout is a good place to start – but check out the OAR’s procrastination workshops or meet with a staff one-on-one for a more personalized conversation.

**PROCRASTINATION-BUSTING TACTICS**

- **Use the 5-minute plan:** Commit to spending five minutes on the task. After five minutes, you can choose whether to continue working on the project or not. Telling yourself that you only have to work five minutes will allow you to get past the specter of a seemingly daunting task – and once you get started, you may find yourself doing more and more. The hardest part is often starting.

- **Use your momentum:** If you have just completed a project you enjoyed or were eager to finish, use that energy to get started on the next task you’re facing.

- **Be specific:** Break down large, complex tasks into smaller parts. For instance, instead of sitting down to work on your “20 page paper”, devote your time to writing a thesis, identifying sources, gathering evidence, creating an outline, or brainstorming.

- **Write about writing:** If you can’t seem to get off the ground, spend 10 minutes writing about why that is. You may loosen your thoughts or realize you need an aspect of the assignment clarified.

- **Commit yourself:** If you struggle with procrastination, decide that it’s time for a change. This is especially effective during moments of substantial change, such as starting as a first year, starting a new semester, or deciding on a major. Reinvent yourself as someone who does not procrastinate, and commit to that goal. Enlist others to support you in this endeavor and to hold you accountable.

- **Address the root of the problem:** Seek out campus resources to deal with issues that you are struggling with. For instance, if you are dealing with distracting personal issues, visit CAPS. If you’re not sure where to find help, speak to your dean or an OAR staff member – they may be able to point you in the right direction.

- **Begin before you feel ready:** If you put off work until you “feel” ready, you are not likely to begin at all. If a task is daunting or potentially unpleasant, you may never feel ready, so attempts to “prepare” yourself to tackle the task are, more likely, simply stalling techniques. Start working on the task, even if you don’t feel ready.

- **Unschedule:** If you find that you just can’t get everything done, consider paring back your obligations.
• Use a timer instead of a watch: So you've decided to try the 5-minute plan and schedule your study blocks for 60 minutes. Great! Just be sure to use a timer, rather than a watch. Your five minutes won't be spent productively if you constantly lose time and focus by shifting your gaze to the watch face.

• Work in brief, 60–90 minute sessions: If your study sessions are lasting four hours, studies show that you are experiencing diminishing returns. After about an hour our productivity dips and we are more prone to procrastination. Shorter sessions not only increase your work efficiency, but also appear less daunting.

• Select a proper environment: The ideal study environment varies from person to person, but here are some general guidelines: Use the space exclusively for study – you'll be more prone to distraction if you use a space where you normally sleep or watch Netflix. Pick a space with minimal distractions and a comfortable working environment. Turn off or block the Internet if possible.

• Monotask: Resist the urge to multitask; focusing on a single task is most efficient.

• Use your most productive hours: We tend to feel more ambitious during the day, so schedule tasks that require problem-solving skills during daylight hours. Likewise, if you feel most alert and productive during the morning hours, study then.

• Step back: Every now and then step back and evaluate your progress. Look at the big picture to make sure you're not wasting time on minutiae (e.g. playing with the formatting on your paper to avoid writing your first argument)

• Verbalize your excuses: Write down your reasons for putting things off. They might sound silly once they're out in the open.

• Cross it off: If you constantly put off a trivial task, consider eliminating it altogether. This will free you from the burden of “procrastinating” on a task that is unlikely to ever be completed.