

Teen Reads

TextProject.org

Volume 1, Issue 2

Late... Again

Why do we procrastinate?

Small Steps, Big Reward

Tips for overcoming
procrastination

Small steps in action

How James & Sofia learned to stop
procrastinating

Late... Again

It's nearly bedtime, and Nova looks anxiously at her alarm, which is set at 7 a.m. Nova is a solid student but she has a problem with her history essay on Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth I. It's due tomorrow morning. The essay doesn't have to be long, only two pages. But as the deadline approaches, Nova has yet to write a word. Nova deals with her feelings. "Why do I do this to myself? Why didn't I start earlier? Why can't I be better at organizing?"



Image by Freepik

Stuck starting a paper? One study claims more than 80% of teens procrastinate doing school work. [Source: National University](#)

Why do we procrastinate?

Nova is not alone in her struggle. Procrastination is a common challenge for people of all ages and for lots of reasons. Teens like Nova often put off doing things because their brains are still growing. As a result, it can be hard for teens to wait for rewards and manage time. Teens also have many school and social things to balance. It's also easy to get distracted by activities on phones. Plus, some teens might be scared of not doing things perfectly. So, teens might delay doing their work to avoid stress. Or, they might want things to be just right.

One thing is for sure: procrastinating does not make someone a bad person. Learning how to organize time is a skill. Controlling one's feelings, especially when it comes to wrestling with new or hard things, is a part of growing up.

TeenReads™

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[TextProject.org](#)

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Procrastination is a learned behavior. This means, that procrastination can be unlearned too!

Tools to Help with Procrastination

You can work through strong feelings that can lead to procrastination. A first step is to recognize why you're putting off a task. Nova knew how to conduct a web search. However, the huge number of sources on the two historical figures left her feeling stuck. She was unsure of which ones to choose.

At school the next day, Nova asked for help. She learned some practical strategies like **breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps**. Another recommended strategy was to **recognize an accomplishment**, including finishing a small step on a project.

Nova applied the strategy of **breaking down a task**. She decided to begin her essay by describing the biggest accomplishment of each queen. When Nova finished the paragraph, she put her arms over her head and said a silent, "Yay!"

Now, Nova knows that there are very few who don't put off some things some of the time. The important thing is having a toolbox with tools to pull out when you need them.



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Small Steps, Big Rewards

Do a search on the internet of tools to stop procrastinating and you'll find thousands! There are all kinds of tools—from developing schedules for particular tasks to making choices about what is most important. The suggestions may be so overwhelming that you might just decide to procrastinate rather than to pick a strategy that works.



Do you procrastinate finding ways to stop procrastinating?

Make it Bite-Sized

But there is one tool that is at the top of many experts' lists, whether the task is buying a present for someone or writing a report on Elizabeth I and Cleopatra. Different people give the strategy different names but "small steps" is a good description. The concept is simple: rather than tackling a large task all at once, break it down into smaller, bite-sized steps.



Take a First Step

For instance, think about a research paper you need to write. You can view it as one enormous assignment. Or, you can break it down into smaller tasks, such as:

- choosing a topic,
- conducting research for each section,

Sofia and Abuela



Sofia loves this picture of her abuela holding her.

There is one week left before Sofia needs to send the book off to be printed. It's time to start using the app for designing the photo book. She decides to go with a time line, beginning with pictures when she was a baby. The first night of learning the app takes a little time but, after that, it only takes two more evenings before she's done.

Sofia breathes a sigh of relief when she sends her file to the store. Her sigh of relief is even greater when the store calls to tell her the book is ready. Right on time! Now, Sofia can wrap up the book and get ready for the birthday party, which is the next day.

At the party, Sofia's abuela opens her gift. Sofia snaps a picture of the huge smile on her grandma's face as she flips through the photobook's pages. Sofia thinks, "Maybe I'll make another photo book one day!"

- outlining,
- writing the introduction, body, and conclusion separately
- revising and editing.



**Take a small, first step.
Just get going!**

From your task list, pick the part that you find easiest. Do that part first. Once you take that first step, you will have energy to take the next step.

After all, who isn't excited when a toddler takes their first step? When you've taken a step on something that seems hard at first, you can feel excited too. That's one of the best things about small steps: you're already moving in the right direction!

Small Steps in Action

It can be useful to glimpse how others use the small steps method to deal with procrastination. Here's a look at James. James is a sophomore who has a big algebra test coming up. Algebra isn't his strongest subject but James is determined to learn the material. In the past, James would try to cram everything the night before the exam.



Study groups can help you understand difficult material.

This time, James decides to try the small steps method the week before the test. By breaking down his study sessions into smaller chunks, James covers the material systematically. He does not feel overwhelmed. This approach helps him retain information better, and it reduces the stress associated with last-minute cramming.

James' Small Steps Study Schedule

- Day 1** James reviews his notes from previous chapters for 30 minutes.
- Day 2** He solves practice problems related to the first two chapters for 30 minutes.
- Day 3** James watches online tutorials for 20 minutes. They help him to understand complex concepts from Chapter 3.
- Day 4** He makes flashcards of key formulas and concepts for 40 minutes.
- Day 5** James spends an hour practicing with a study group to reinforce his understanding.
- Day 6** He takes a practice test for 45 minutes. He does his best to simulate exam conditions.
- Day 7** On the last day, James reviews his weakest areas for 30 minutes.

Making A Photo Book in Small Steps

Photo Book for Abuela

1. Pick a service.
2. Choose a theme.
3. Select photos.
4. Organize the photos.
5. Review and edit.
6. Place the order.
7. Pick up the order.

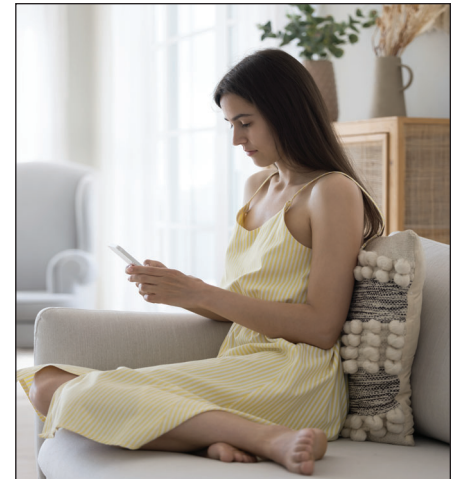
Sofia wants to make a photo book for her grandmother for her birthday next month. She finds a list on the internet of steps for making a photo book. She groans when she sees how long it is.

But Sofia decides to start with step one—picking a service. She researches the cost of making a book and the time that it takes for printing.

She finds a local store that needs five days for printing and delivery for a fee that she can afford. That means that she has three weeks left to make the book.

Now, she needs to decide on a theme. She scrolls through the pictures on her cellphone. At first, she was going to ask her sister and brother for their pictures. Then, when she sees how many pictures she already has, Sofia decides to call the book “Abuela and Sofia.”

For a half hour every day, Sofia selects pictures that illustrate happy times with her grandma. She decides that it also would be nice to have some pictures from when she was little. She asks her dad to send her some pictures from his cellphone. She downloads those pictures onto her laptop as well.



Sofia selects photos that match her theme.