

Your Personal Guide

the
**virtual
office**
pearl



HOW TO STOP PROCRASTINATING AND GET ORGANISED

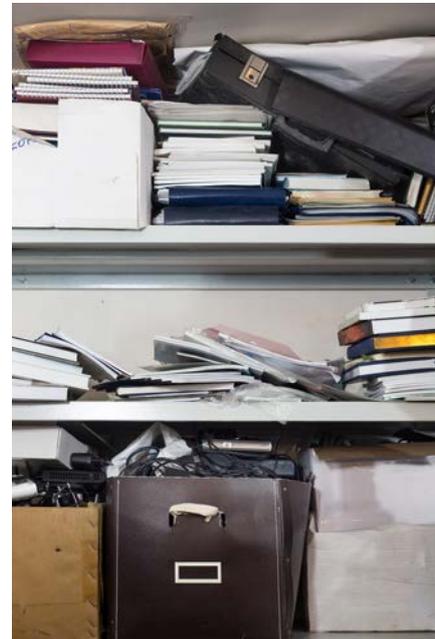


Do you have piles of paper surrounding your desk? Do you have boxes of paperwork to go through in the spare room, inside closets, or in the corner of your office? Are your computer files a disorganised jumble of folders, text files and Word documents full of ideas that you will never find again? Is your e-mail inbox so full you can't find anything? Do you have many plans and ideas that you just never get to? Does the idea of getting organised make you uncomfortable and a little bit nervous? If so, then this guide is for you.

IDENTIFYING YOUR ORGANISING STYLE

Getting organised is an important factor in beating procrastination. The first thing you need to do is figure out your organisational style. Even as a disorganised person you have an organisational style. Trust me! Knowing your own personal organisational style will help you avoid choosing methods that won't work for you.

- **Neat Freak** -- You put everything away out of sight, however the term 'neat' could be misleading. You feel neat because it's all out of sight and out of mind.
- **Structured Towers** -- You put everything out where everyone can see it, usually in piles all over the place. You cannot find anything when you need it.
- **Basket Case** -- You put everything into baskets so that they look neat and organised. And some are in the 'too hard' basket – the bin! But you are still not organised.



Understanding your organisational style will help you move forward with creating a system of organisation that works for you. Working with your personality, instead of against it, will make becoming more organised a lot simpler. So, it doesn't matter whether you pile everything up, stuff everything out of sight, or have lots of baskets and bins with all your work in them, or not. You can work with your natural inclinations to create a plan and develop a system that works for you.

If you're still not sure about your organisational style, think for a moment about what you do when you receive a monthly bill. Do you throw it on a 'bill pile', file it away, or throw it in a basket (or drawer)? Some people just prefer to be able to see everything because they're afraid they'll forget something. Other people feel more accomplished if it's all out of sight (and out of mind), while others do a mixture of the two. Which one are you?

COMMON REASONS FOR PROCRASTINATION

As a procrastinator, it's important for you to get to the bottom of the reasons why. There are a few typical reasons that people procrastinate. You probably thought you were unique in your ability to procrastinate, but in truth it's quite common. Pretty much everyone suffers from procrastination tendencies in at least one aspect of their lives, whether it's getting work done, doing household chores, or going to the gym. Wouldn't it be great if we procrastinated about eating that delicious chocolate brownie as much as we do about going to the gym?

However, there are reasons people procrastinate. The fact is, when you procrastinate on certain things, you're getting some sort of payoff for the behavior. You're avoiding the pain of doing the task right now. Maybe you realise that it may cause you pain later, but you put that out of your mind. What you're concerned with right now is avoiding the pain **now**. Pain felt later is not real yet.



Fear of Failure

This is the most obvious reason people procrastinate. The fear that you won't succeed is so strong that you'd rather not try at all. Your mind tells you that you're not a failure because you didn't do it yet. Many people who fear failure have perfectionist tendencies. Perfectionism is just a cover and an excuse for not ever finishing anything due to the fear of failure.

Fear of Success

Believe it or not, some people procrastinate due to a fear of success, the inverse of fear of failure. If you have an innate feeling that you don't deserve success and lack confidence in your ability to continue being successful, you will procrastinate. Once you are on top, it's harder to stay on top, so why get to the top at all? Fear of being able to repeat success can block you from ever experiencing success in the first place.

Addiction to the Rush

This is something that often happens to college students or people who work with deadlines. They wait until the last minute and the extra adrenaline that is produced makes them feel good. They get addicted to the adrenaline and seek reasons to flood their body with it again, and again. Adrenaline junkies often believe they do better work at the last minute, which could not be further from the truth. If you perform at a high level at the last minute, imagine how well you would do with a real plan of action?

Lack of Interest

Let's face it, there are some things in life that you put off because you simply don't like to do them. Hoovering the house, weeding the garden, writing that report, deleting out-of-date emails and doing your tax return are some of chores that come to mind. How about those expense reports for work? Yes, it's boring!! So, you procrastinate because you simply do not want to do it to start with. You wait until the very last moment to do it, maybe you're even late with it, or don't do it at all. This can be a real problem.



You Need Training

Some people procrastinate because they really aren't sure how to do something. They need someone to train them how to do it right. It doesn't matter if it's doing household chores, work related tasks, or something else entirely - if you tend to procrastinate about something, ask yourself if you are procrastinating because you don't know how to do it or don't know how to schedule it.

You Don't Like to Say No

A lot of disorganised procrastinators tend to also be very passive aggressive. By putting off doing things you've committed to do, it's your way of saying no without saying no. If you're a person who doesn't like to say no, because you want to be known as someone who is nice, then you put off doing what you've agreed to do -- I hate to inform you of this, but you are passive aggressive, not nice. By not saying no when you are organised will mean that it may challenge you timewise, but you still manage to get the job done. More on that scenario, later.

You're Overwhelmed

It's not uncommon to start putting things off when you simply get in over your head. Due to poor organisational ability, you simply bit off more than you could chew. Plus, you lack the training to chunk together actionable steps to beat the feeling of overwhelm. When it all gets too much, it seems easier to just ignore anything that needs to be done.



You're a Dreamer and a Talker

Many people who are otherwise great people tend to love to talk about doing, rather than 'actually' doing. The problem with this is that if you never follow up with doing what you're talking about, you'll never achieve success. You'll always just be a talker and a dreamer. Spending time making vision boards on Pinterest feels productive – even managing to write up a business plan or make a list of things to do can help you feel productive, but if you don't back that up with some action, or follow through with them, you're not productive. You need to apply targets, dates, mini-steps – whatever works for you. Otherwise, you're all talk and no action.

Inability to Visualise Success

Some procrastinators have serious problems with creating a picture in their minds of future success. You let your past inform your future too much. You just cannot see yourself being successful at anything, so you put off trying and put off doing your best because you just can't see yourself beyond where you are right now.

OVERCOMING PERSONAL ROADBLOCKS

If you've identified yourself in one or more of the reasons people procrastinate and have identified your organising style, it's time to overcome your personal roadblocks and stop the excuses.

There is a saying that 'failing to plan is planning to fail'. There is also another saying that says 'name it, claim it'. Both are true. It doesn't really matter where you stand on the issues, if you don't plan for success based on your own personality and way of doing things, you can't succeed. If you cannot accept your part in being a disorganised procrastinator, you'll be stuck forever.

Sometimes disorganisation or procrastination is situational. In severe cases it's chronic. Whether you're chronically disorganised or situationally disorganised, the fix is the same. Develop a plan, create systems, and then follow them. Ironically, doing this will rid you of both disorganisation and procrastination, which seem to feed off each other.

Fixing Bad Habits and Creating New Good Ones

The best way to fix a bad habit is to replace it with a good habit. But first, you need to identify the bad habits that you want to change. Write a list either on paper, your phone or on your computer – whichever suits you. Secondly, put them in order of least offensive to worst offensive bad habits. Start with one of the least offensive or problematic bad habits first. Why? Because starting small will give you some feeling of success before you try to tackle something really huge, like smoking for instance.



Compartmentalise the Habit

That's right; when you're first trying to get rid of a bad habit instead of just going cold turkey, designate specific times when you will deal with the behavior. Perhaps your least offensive habit is throwing mail in a big pile on the kitchen table without opening it.



Choose a specific time of day to check the mail, or maybe not even every single day. This way you will lower the times you have to deal with the mail. It's OK to choose to check your mail only on certain days of the week. The Earth will not stop spinning!

When you do check the mail, you're going to bring it all in, stand by the bin, and without sitting down toss the rubbish, and keep the rest. Then you will take the rest to your office, or wherever it is that you deal with mail or pay the bills.

Only deal with the mail once. Book that appointment, or schedule an online payment, note on the bill or letter the actions you took, and file it. Other types of mail that aren't rubbish read immediately and file in your chosen filing method or you may decide that it goes in the bin after all.

Create & Automate Routines

Part of overcoming disorganisation and procrastination lies in your ability to create and automate routines. In the example above, regarding the mail, you create a routine of checking the mail only on certain days and at certain times. You give yourself enough time to go through the mail – and more importantly, deal with it - ensuring that you only handle it once. As you do this more often, it will become a routine, and you won't give it a second thought.



If you haven't done this already, you can further automate this process by requesting your bills to be sent online, and use online banking to schedule all payments based around your salary payments and when the bills are due. This can not only save you time, but help prevent overdue fees by not paying on time.

Getting Organised at Home

I am the self-appointed 'Queen of Lists' to the extent that I even write down something I have completed – even though it wasn't on my list (or I didn't have the time to put it there) – just so that I could have the satisfaction of crossing it off! That feeling of accomplishment spurs you on to cross more items off the list, and you can see at a glance how much you have achieved, and be able to prioritise what's left. You will begin to feel in control.

So, create a master 'to do' list with all the little jobs that need to be done broken down into a schedule that, if necessary, has various family members assigned to certain tasks. Remember, do NOT leave your name off the list so that you do 'everything else' - no, put yourself on the list too, and make the list very specific, leaving nothing out.

Be specific with the duties (remember, those such as 'clean the kitchen' sometimes need to be broken down into 'empty the dishwasher' and 'wipe down the counters', depending on the family – I know from experience!). List daily tasks, weekly tasks, monthly tasks, and even tasks that you only do once or twice a year and longer, including getting the car serviced, or renewing your passport. By listing it all, giving it a specific date and time it should be done, and naming the person who needs to do it, you'll create a routine that will work.

Getting Organised at Work

Being organised at work can be an important ingredient in getting promotions. If you are procrastinating and show disorganisation at work, it could look bad for you. Even if you

somehow manage to get things done by deadlines, if your desk is piled high, and rubbish is surrounding your work station, management might take notice.

The first thing you should do is acknowledge your organisational style. Then find a way to work within that truth.

Remember the different organisational styles:

- **Neat Freak** -- You put everything away out of sight, however the term 'neat' could be misleading. You feel neat because it's all out of sight and out of mind.
- **Structured Towers** -- You put everything out where everyone can see it, usually in piles all over the place. You cannot find anything when you need it.
- **Basket Filing** -- You put everything into baskets so that they look neat and organised. And some are in the 'too hard' basket – the bin! But you are still not organised.

If you happen to be a **Neat Freak**, filing away paperwork before you process it, this is a very dangerous system. If possible, instead of stuffing it all out of sight (and out of mind), seek to process each piece of paper before you file it away. This is really the only way to prevent you from forgetting about what needs to be done. You can tell yourself that you're going to remember something, but more than likely you won't. That's why someone invented E-Calendars and other wonderful online apps. See some of the useful [resources](#) I have listed for you on my website.

Over the years you've tricked your brain to thinking you're doing a lot of work because you file it all away, or leave it in your mailbox 'to read later'. On the outside everything looks dandy. But, take a closer look and you're a mess. Because if you have not processed each piece of paper or e-mail to determine what actions need to be taken, put actions in your schedule, and so forth, you're not really accomplishing anything but stuffing things out of sight and out of mind.



This type of thing will catch up with you eventually and show up in work not done, reports not completed, and the inability to find what you've hidden away. Use a white board, or an app to post messages and items that you need to remember easily.

If you often leave everything out like **Structured Towers**, then you need to create a system using your natural organisational methods to your advantage. Instead of just throwing piles of paper on your desk, or marking e-mails requiring action with a flag or 'unread' to deal with later, create a system which helps you to prioritise. With paper files use trays or baskets labelled 'Urgent', 'Filing', 'Pending' or 'Reading/Processing'. Use 'Tasks' in Outlook for your e-mails, and put a 'due by' date on them. If you're not sure about this feature, read more about it here. Then create a schedule in which you will accomplish those tasks, e.g. only check your email inbox three times a day instead of every five minutes.

Set aside a specific time each day, (depending on the importance of each) to process your paper trays. As you clear each one, file the items or throw away as needed. This way, you only touch each piece of paper coming out of each tray once. If you set up a schedule to deal with everything, you'll not only feel more accomplished, but you will also actually be more accomplished.

Need to provide management with a monthly expense report? You'll just print it out because you've been entering your expenses each day as they occurred, right? In addition, if it makes you feel better to see things out around you, keep your tasks visible in Outlook (they disappear when you've completed them), or your 'to-do' list open and at your fingertips.

If you happen to be one of those people who does **Basket Filing**, you may find that it will be a lot easier for you to get your disorganisation under control. Simply label your baskets as in the example of trays or baskets above, which are labelled with the action that needs to be done on those items. Then set up a schedule to deal with and clear the baskets over the course of time.



This organisational style will also benefit greatly from using technology to keep things organised and at your fingertips. Programs like Evernote work very well to keep track of information rather than saving pieces of paper all over the place. Evernote helps you capture so many ideas and things. What's more, they are stored in an organised manner so that you can find it easily using your computer or mobile device.

FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY ORGANISED AT HOME OR WORK:

1. **Purge Often** -- One sure way to get more organised is to get rid of things. You can get rid of a lot of pieces of paper by processing them appropriately, photographing them and storing in the computer, or just throwing unneeded things away.
2. **KISS** – ‘Keep it simple and straightforward’ is something everyone should remember. If you make things too complicated, you're not going to do them. That's why you want to look at what your current organisation style is, and work with what you already have.
3. **Be Creative** -- Get outside of your own head and think of new ways to keep your life organised. Learn new software such as Evernote, use containers outside of their intended use and make it fun – simply use your imagination to create organisation.
4. **Clean Up Every Day** -- Don't keep things in their baskets or folders for weeks at a time. Clear your desk, and reprioritise before going home after finishing your work.
5. **Keep a Calendar** – Using a calendar (on the computer or in a diary) is the best way to ensure that you get things done. How you choose to keep your calendar is up to you, but this is the one thing that will help you the most.

6. **Forgive Yourself** -- No one is perfect, mistakes will happen, backsliding will happen, and your organisation might get off track. Just stay aware.

Whether at home or at work, all these organisational tips will help you not only get organised but also help eliminate procrastination. If your world is more orderly, and you can see at a glance what needs to be done, you'll lose the desire to put 'it' off until tomorrow.

How to Get Back on Track When Something Throws You Off

No matter how good your plan is, you might find that after a few weeks you slide back into old habits. Or, perhaps something threw you off your schedule, such as illness or another emergency. Whatever the reason, you find yourself back into your old habits of disorganisation and procrastination.



- **You have Choices** -- Remember that you're not without choices in your life. You can choose to let the interruption cause you to fall off the cliff or you can grab control and immediately start climbing your way back up the mountain.
- **Be Honest with Yourself** -- Look at what has caused you to lose your focus. Are you overly tired, are you eating right, is something else wrong causing you to go back to your old ways of procrastination and disorganisation?
- **Start Small** -- Tackle one small thing to get it reorganised. It's especially important to go back and reorganise the things you've already organised that have gotten off track. Don't tackle anything new until you've at least gotten back to where you were.
- **Go Back to your Calendar** -- The easiest place to start is your calendar. If you've been writing things in it, even the minutiae, then you should have a place to start right there in today's date. If not, start writing in your calendar again.
- **Let Go** -- Don't beat yourself up about falling off the path. The important thing is that you're trying to better yourself and let go of procrastination and disorganisation. Remember: Baby steps will get you there just as well as leaps and bounds.
- **Do what Works** -- If you've discovered a way to do something that works, stick to it. No reason to rewrite the story, or reinvent the wheel. If it works, it works; stick to it. However, be mindful that you're not letting disorganisation and procrastination be what works. Because, it doesn't really work; it's an illusion.

Take heart that you've noticed and realise that you can get control once again simply because you've accepted that you need to. Even if all you do is start with something small like organising your purse, filling in your to-do calendar, or cleaning off your desk at work. The fact is, starting is half the battle.

The ABC's of Getting Started

If you are having trouble getting started, it's likely that you're making it harder than it needs to be. A lot of disorganised procrastinators tend to look at the big picture and see everything



at once, which can be very overwhelming. Learning how to look at any situation differently and to break them down into smaller chunks will help you in getting started. In fact, it's as easy as learning your ABCs.

A - Take ACTION

Since a lot of procrastinators tend to believe that they don't know enough and that is what causes them to not do things, it may seem impossible to simply 'take action'. But the truth is, you've spent enough time learning, you know what to do. You're going to learn even more from doing, than you are from reading about and thinking about doing. So, take action today. Pick one small thing and go for it.

B - BREAK it Down

The way to truly go for 'it' is to break everything down into smaller, doable chunks. Need to write a business report? Try listing the important points you want to go over in the report first. Don't even worry about writing an outline yet. Just write the points. Want to organise your desk? Start with simply throwing away anything that is rubbish. Want to be less frantic when looking for something in your purse or briefcase? Clean that out first. Pick small things to do and before you know it, all those small tasks will add up to big success.

C - Create Momentum

Momentum simply means forward progress. In order to create forward progress, you got started, you broke it down to small, workable chunks, and you kept on going. As you keep moving forward, everything you've done adds up to create bigger and larger success. As you focus on the small things, all those things combined translate into the big things. The big things that can get you promoted at work, help you break through to the next level in your business, and bring calm and organisation to your home.

IN CONCLUSION

Letting go of procrastination and getting organised is a critical skill to learn. It's far too easy to just let things pile up until you start facing overwhelm. But if you keep your aim high, and focus on the small picture, you can beat overwhelm and finally get organised. Getting organised will allow you to keep track of even more amazing ideas, enable you to get more from your ideas, drastically lower your stress, help you waste less time, become more respectable and finally = stop procrastinating!