

Lesson Plan: Can Procrastination Be a Good Thing?

Featured Resources

[Above the Noise: Can Procrastination Be A Good Thing?](#)

[The Lowdown: Can Procrastination Ever Be Productive?](#)



Opening Quick-Write Prompt

Are you a procrastinator? If so, write about the last time you procrastinated on a school assignment, a chore or another task. Why did you procrastinate? Did you complete the task? If it had a deadline, did you complete it on time? How did you feel?

If you are not a regular procrastinator, what is it about having a task to do that prompts you to complete it right away? How do you feel when you have an unfinished assignment?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will determine if they are task-driven or deadline-driven. They will create a plan for completing assignments based on this determination.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

Why do we procrastinate and is procrastination always bad?

There is a biological reason as to why we procrastinate: the prefrontal cortex and limbic system of our brain. The former is responsible for planning and decision making, while the latter contains the brain's pleasure center. The limbic system is more developed than the prefrontal cortex, so it often wins when we are faced with an unpleasant task, making humans naturally inclined to procrastinate.

Procrastination is often looked at negatively--as a bad habit. However, new research suggests that some people need to procrastinate in order to get things done. Distractions provide the mind a break during which we can creatively think through problems. Some psychologists even believe that some people do their best work when they procrastinate. These people are

referred to as “deadline-driven.” They tend to perform their best when the deadline is imminent.

Chronic procrastination is when someone consistently puts off completing tasks. One in five people are thought to fall into this category. Many psychologists suggest that chronic procrastination can lead to unhealthy levels of stress and feelings of constant shame. While few experts disagree that procrastination can lead to stress, many have recently suggested that this stress is not a bad thing. Some people need to experience that stress in order to prompt them into action.

Key Vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Chronic (adj.)	Constant or occurring often <i>My sister's chronic procrastination caused her to stay up late finishing assignments and to not get enough sleep.</i>
Motivate (v.)	To give a cause or reason to act <i>Knowing I had a test tomorrow motivated me to begin studying tonight.</i>
Procrastinate (v.)	To intentionally put off; to delay <i>I always procrastinate on my homework and wind up working on it until the last minute.</i>
Stress (n.)	The response by our bodies to a stimulus, like anxiety, fear or worry <i>I feel a lot of stress when I have a big test coming up.</i>

Investigate

- Ask a few students to share thoughts from their quick-write.
- Have students watch the [Above the Noise episode](#) as a class or in small groups.
 - **Stop the video at :36 and ask:** How many college students were found to procrastinate in one study? How many of you procrastinate on assignments?
 - **Stop at 2:05:** Review the differences between task-driven and deadline-driven people.
 - **Stop at 2:58:** What is the biological reason that people procrastinate?
 - **Stop at 3:12:** How can procrastination be a good thing?

- **Stop at 3:56:** What are chronic procrastinators? What are some problems with chronic procrastination?
- **Stop at 4:24:** Why are people chronic procrastinators? Is it always bad?
- In small groups, have students discuss whether they are task-driven or deadline-driven. How does their school work fit into their daily schedule? Ask students to discuss when they feel they are best able to complete assignments or other tasks--right away or right before it needs to be done? For deadline-driven students, does the added stress help them get their work done and/or do they think it negatively affects their health?
- **Transition to the Make and Share:** Tell students they will have a chance to share their response to this issue in the comments section of The Lowdown. The first time they comment, students must sign in to [Disqus](#), a free discussion app embedded in The Lowdown.
 - To sign in to [Disqus](#), click the “Comments” button at the bottom of The Lowdown.
 - Click the blue “Get Started” button in the gray “Welcome to Disqus” box.
 - Students will need to enter a username. We recommend first name, last initial.
 - After signing in for the first time, students must verify their email address before commenting. A verification email will appear in their inbox once they sign in to Disqus.

Make and Share

- Individually, students post responses in the comments section about whether they are task-driven or deadline-driven and how this fits into, or affects, their daily activities. Task-driven students can comment on how it is to do group work with, or be dependent on, a deadline-driven person. Deadline-driven students can comment on why they procrastinate and if they think it negatively affects their health.
- Students can also develop a plan, or write down steps for completing school work based on their determination. Would they make a list to check off items? Would they break down assignments into smaller pieces? Would they create deadlines for themselves or have a reward system? Students can share their plans in their post.
 - Responses should be supported by evidence from the Above the Noise episode, The Lowdown post, or other research on the topic. (See Source list)
 - Encourage students to reply to other comments after posting their response. Remind them to use evidence to support their claims and respectful language when replying to others.

Assessment/Reflection

- Students reflect on what they have learned either through a class discussion or in writing:
 - What have you learned about procrastination? Do you think it is beneficial or does it affect you negatively?
 - What will you tell someone the next time they tell you procrastination is bad?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Common Core Standards and NGSS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCR.A.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCR.A.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
NGSS.SEP.7	Engaging in argument from evidence
NGSS.SEP.8	Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information