

Procrastination

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is procrastination?
2. Are you a procrastinator?
3. What types of tasks do you often put off until the last minute?
4. Why might perfectionists be procrastinators?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Scan the article on the next page and find the correct word in **bold**.

1. a synonym of "procrastinate" _____ *put off* _____
2. a gerund that describes doing something difficult _____
3. an antonym of "fail" _____
4. an adjective that means "perfect" _____
5. a word that describes people who have difficulty making choices _____
6. an antonym of "lazy" _____
7. a synonym of "intimidating" _____
8. a word that means a certain way of thinking _____
9. a word related to self-trust _____
10. an antonym of "relaxed" _____
11. a word related to responsibility _____
12. a verb that means to do the most important things first _____

Reading

PROCRASTINATION

There's no time like the present

1. The word “procrastination” translates from Latin, meaning *to move forward until tomorrow*. As most procrastinators would admit, tasks rescheduled for tomorrow often get **put off** for another day. In fact, habitual procrastinators often wait until the very last minute before finishing things. Tasks without deadlines may never even get off the ground.
2. People who procrastinate do not avoid getting everything done. In fact, many procrastinators **excel** at checking off small or simple tasks on their to-do lists. It's usually the bigger, more difficult decisions and projects that get postponed again and again.
3. What reasons do you have for procrastinating? While some people swear they work better **under pressure**, others are **indecisive** and rarely know where to start. Lack of interest can also cause people to put things off. Some days we just aren't in the mood to get something done. Tomorrow we may actually feel up for the challenge.
4. Did you know that some procrastinators are actually perfectionists? Perfectionists defer tasks if they lack **confidence** in completing them perfectly. Dr. Tim Pynchyl, a psychology professor, calls procrastination “an emotion regulation problem” rather than a time-management problem. Perfectionists set unrealistic standards for themselves. Their all-or-nothing **mentality** delays or prevents them from **tackling** tasks until they're confident they can achieve **flawless** results.
5. According to some time-management experts, procrastination does have some positive aspects. By the time procrastinators are ready to start a project, there isn't enough time to tackle every detail. As such, procrastination helps people **prioritize** tasks and cut out non-essential elements. Procrastinating leaves little to no time to overwork or overprepare, two common downfalls of perfectionists.
6. Being aware of your own procrastination patterns can help you stay **productive**. Do you tend to procrastinate on projects you're not interested in or ones you don't fully understand? Maybe it's the big decisions that slow you down. Breaking up large projects or decisions into small, manageable chunks and choices is a good way to ensure productivity. Having an **accountability** partner is another method. By the time a big deadline rolls around, you will have checked off so many items that the finish line won't feel so **daunting**.

“Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.”

—Mark Twain

Comprehension

A. Questions & Answers

Discuss these questions in pairs and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is paragraph 1 mainly about?
2. What does the subtitle mean?
3. What does the reading say about perfectionism? Use the word “mentality” in your answer.
4. According to the article, what is one benefit to procrastinating?
5. Why is it a good idea to break up large projects into small tasks?

B. 5 Facts

Write down five facts that summarize the reading.
Compare your facts with your partner’s facts.
Prioritize the top five facts and share them with your class.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Vocabulary Review

A. Match-Up

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------|---|
| _____ | 1. put off | a) experiencing stress due to a difficult situation |
| _____ | 2. excel | b) to attack a problem in order to try to solve it |
| _____ | 3. under pressure | c) to delay until a later time |
| _____ | 4. indecisive | d) responsibility for someone's needs |
| _____ | 5. confidence | e) to decide what is important |
| _____ | 6. mentality | f) finding it difficult to make a decision or choice |
| _____ | 7. tackle | g) difficult to deal with, intimidating |
| _____ | 8. flawless | h) a certain way of thinking |
| _____ | 9. prioritize | i) to be very good at something |
| _____ | 10. productive | j) able to produce a lot in a reasonable amount of time |
| _____ | 11. accountability | k) perfect |
| _____ | 12. daunting | l) the belief in one's ability to succeed |

Vocab Challenge

Look at the reading again. How many synonyms of "procrastinate" can you spot?

B. Rewrite the Sentences

Choose three sentences from the reading that include a **bold** word. Replace the keyword with another word in each sentence. Compare your new sentences with a partner's sentences. Was your partner able to find new words with a similar meaning to the bold words? You should also check each other's spelling.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Grammar Review

FUTURE PERFECT (FOR PROCRASTINATORS)

A. Introduction

The future perfect is used to talk about two actions that will occur at two different times in the future. In a future perfect sentence, the first action uses the *future perfect* tense and the second action (further into the future) uses the *simple present* tense. This tense is often used when talking about procrastination.

Future Perfect	
Form	will + have + past participle
Function	one future action will happen before another future action
Time Marker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> by the time
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our kids will have moved out by the time we install a pool. By the time you cut the grass, we will have grown a forest. We'll have already finished painting by the time you get out of your pj's. By the time you figure out what to order, I will have finished my meal.

B. Practice

Add an action to each empty box. Then exchange papers with a partner. Practice making future perfect sentences out loud. Use the time markers *before* or *by the time*.

#	Action	Action
1	graduate	
2		move to another country
3	write your essay	
4		buy the groceries
5	sign the contract	

Discussion

1. What types of projects or tasks typically cause you to procrastinate?
2. Are you a perfectionist? Give an example to back up your answer.
3. What procrastination patterns do you notice in someone you know? (Choose a friend or family member.)
4. Do you work better under pressure? Explain.
5. What is one task you have been postponing for a while? What small steps could you take to get it done?
6. Who would you choose for an accountability partner, and why?
7. Are you good at making decisions or are you an indecisive person? Give a real-life example.
8. Identify one problem or task that the whole world needs to tackle. How can everyone work together to get this job done?

Productivity Challenge

Identify one task that you have been putting off for a while. Then choose a partner. Ask each other the following questions.

1. What do you want to tackle? Why is this task so daunting?
2. What is your personal deadline?
3. What is one thing you can do to get started? (Think of something you excel at.)
4. What are three more small things you can do to achieve your goal? Prioritize these items.
5. Who will you ask to be your accountability partner?

Sign your name and add a deadline to confirm your productivity plan.

Signature: _____

Deadline: _____

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

PROCRASTINATION

There's no time like the present

1. The word "procrastination" translates from Latin, meaning *to move forward until tomorrow*. As most procrastinators would admit, tasks rescheduled for tomorrow often get _____ for another day. In fact, _____ procrastinators often wait until the very last minute before finishing things. Tasks without deadlines may never even get off the ground.
2. People who procrastinate do not avoid getting everything done. In fact, many procrastinators _____ at checking off small or simple tasks on their to-do lists. It's usually the bigger, more difficult decisions and projects that get _____ again and again.
3. What reasons do you have for procrastinating? While some people swear they work better _____, others are _____ and rarely know where to start. Lack of interest can also cause people to put things off. Some days we just aren't in the mood to get something done. Tomorrow we may actually feel up for the challenge.
4. Did you know that some procrastinators are actually perfectionists? Perfectionists defer tasks if they lack _____ in completing them perfectly. Dr. Tim Pynchl, a psychology professor, calls procrastination "an emotion regulation problem" rather than a time-management problem. Perfectionists set unrealistic standards for themselves. Their all-or-nothing _____ delays or prevents them from tackling tasks until they're confident they can achieve _____ results.
5. According to some time-management experts, procrastination does have some positive aspects. By the time procrastinators are ready to start a project, there isn't enough time to _____ every detail. As such, procrastination helps people _____ tasks and cut out non-essential elements. Procrastinating leaves little to no time to overwork or overprepare, two common downfalls of perfectionists.
6. Being aware of your own procrastination patterns can help you stay _____. Do you tend to procrastinate on projects you're not interested in or ones you don't fully understand? Maybe it's the big decisions that slow you down. Breaking up large projects or decisions into small, manageable chunks and choices is a good way to ensure productivity. Having an accountability partner is another method. By the time a big deadline rolls around, you will have checked off so many items that the finish line won't feel so _____.

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about procrastination and perfectionism. They discuss why people procrastinate and how to get things done. This lesson includes grammar practice with the future perfect tense.

LEVEL: High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, procrastination, procrastinate, perfectionism, perfectionist, productivity, future perfect, by the time

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or discuss as a class.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. put off | 7. daunting |
| 2. tackling | 8. mentality |
| 3. excel | 9. confidence |
| 4. flawless | 10. under pressure |
| 5. indecisive | 11. accountability |
| 6. productive | 12. prioritize |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the subtitle and quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

A. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Paragraph 1 is mainly a definition of what procrastination is.
- The subtitle means that now is the best time to do or start something. This is a common expression.
- The reading says that perfectionists often procrastinate on things that they don't think they will be able to achieve flawlessly. Their all-or-nothing mentality holds them back from getting things done.

- According to the article, one benefit of procrastinating is that it helps you prioritize the most important tasks. You don't have time to overwork or overprepare.
- Breaking up large projects into small tasks helps you stay disciplined and prevents procrastination. People often procrastinate when jobs seem too big or complex.

B. 5 FACTS

Answers will vary.

Vocabulary Review

VOCAB CHALLENGE

Answers will vary. Related words are: put off, defer, avoid, postpone, wait, delay, slow down.

A. MATCH-UP

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. a | 5. l | 7. b | 9. e | 11. d |
| 2. i | 4. f | 6. h | 8. k | 10. j | 12. g |

B. REWRITE THE SENTENCES

Answers will vary. Place students in pairs or small groups to compare sentences and check each other's spelling.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Grammar Review

Review this specific use of the future perfect. Place students in pairs for Part B. Ask partners to share their best sentences. Make corrections together.

As an additional challenge, have students look for the two sentences in the reading that use the time marker “by the time.” Write the sentences on the board and ask students to analyze the differences. Which one uses the future perfect tense? How are these sentence different in terms of time? (Sentence 1 shows routine/habitual procrastination, and sentence 2 shows a specific situation that could happen in the future if you try a new method.)

1. By the time procrastinators **are** ready to start a project, there **isn't** enough time to tackle every detail.
(simple present, routine action)
2. By the time a big deadline **rolls** around, you **will have checked** off so many items that the finish line won't feel so daunting.
(future perfect, two actions in the future)

Discussion

Answers will vary. Can be done in small groups or as a class.

Productivity Challenge

Challenge your students to choose one thing that they have been procrastinating on. Then have them make some plans to get that thing done. Place students in pairs or small groups to ask each other the questions provided. Have students sign and add a deadline to their productivity plan. You could challenge students to set a deadline that is within the month. Then check in at the end of the month to discuss procrastination again. Did your students complete their tasks? Why or why not?

Listening

1. put off, habitual
2. excel, postponed
3. under pressure, indecisive
4. confidence, mentality, flawless
5. tackle, prioritize
6. productive, daunting

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell this words this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb, *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.