



Totals: Positive _____ Negative _____

All of these study situations represent tasks that are difficult or time-consuming. Look at your totals in each column. In general, based on this exercise, what do you think about difficult or lengthy assignments? Specifically, if you checked negative for items 1 and 8, perhaps writing is difficult for you, and you avoid getting started for that reason. If you checked negative for items 2, 3, 4, and 9, perhaps you avoid studying for tests because you have test anxiety or are afraid that you will fail. See Chapter 13 for some suggestions to ease test anxiety. If you checked negative for item 5, maybe the self-paced learning situation seems overwhelming, and you need the structure of a classroom setting, in which the instructor sets the pace for you. If you checked negative for item 6, it could be that the length of a reading assignment affects the way that you approach it. Perhaps you'd be more motivated to start sooner if you divided the reading assignment into smaller segments with breaks in between. If you checked negative for item 7, perhaps you don't like giving speeches, can't think of what to say, or are afraid you will get nervous and do a poor job. The sooner you start writing your speech, and the more time you give yourself to practice it, the more confident you will feel about your ability to do a good job. If you checked negative for item 10, perhaps you avoid starting assignments like this one because the number of items you have to learn and remember seems like more than you can handle. One of the memory techniques suggested in Chapter 11 may make it easier for you to get started.

How to Beat Procrastination

To avoid procrastination, change your behavior. If you procrastinate when assignments are too difficult or too long, or if you have trouble getting started or lack the motivation to do the work, then instead of focusing on your feelings about the assignment, focus on the advantages of completing it on time. If you get started right away, you will have the advantage of enough time to do your best. You may even complete the assignment with time left over to do something else. However, if you wait too long to begin, then you won't be able to do your best, or you may not finish at all. Fear of failure is sometimes the result of not knowing what to do. If you are not sure about what is expected of you, then you may not know how to begin the assignment. To help you overcome the fear of failure and get started, try using these tips that have worked for many students:

1. Break a large assignment or project into smaller units of work that you can complete in one sitting.
2. Plan rewards for yourself for completing each part of the assignment. Take a break or do something you enjoy.
3. Schedule enough time for completing a long assignment. Set a goal to spend a certain amount of time working each day until the assignment is finished.
4. Get organized. Your attitude toward studying will improve if you have an orderly work area with everything you need at your fingertips—books,

pens and pencils, paper—so that you will be ready to begin the moment you sit down.

5. If you put off assignments because you don't know where to start or aren't sure how to do the work, find out what you need to know. Make an appointment with your instructor. Explain the difficulty you are having and ask for advice. If you have started the assignment, show your instructor where you are having trouble. Or talk to someone in the class. If you missed a lecture or have gaps in your notes, your friend might be able to fill you in.
6. Assume an attitude of confidence, and you will be confident. Instead of thinking, "This is too difficult" or "I'll never finish this," think "I can do this if I get started right now" or "There's a lot of work to do, but if I can do a little bit at a time, I'll be finished before I know it."

Learning to manage time and avoiding procrastination require some effort. Do not be discouraged if your first efforts are unsuccessful. Try to pinpoint your reasons for procrastinating. Identify your avoidance tactics and try to eliminate them. Experiment with schedules until you come up with a plan that works for you. With determination, you will take control of your time and your life—and you will reach your goals.

Your Study Place

Managing your time well also means choosing a quiet place to study. If you are a resident student, you probably do most of your studying in your room or in the library. If you are a commuter, chances are you do the majority of your studying at home. In either case, you probably have to fight distractions, and the best way to do that is to schedule your study time when and where you are least likely to be disturbed.

Your study place should be comfortable, quiet, well lighted, and supplied with everything you need to study.



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