

# A Disorganized Procrastinator's Guide to Time Management and Getting Organized



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Do you have piles of paper surrounding your desk? Do you have boxes of paperwork to go through in the attic, inside closets, in the corner of your office that need to be organized? Are your computer files a disorganized jumble of text files and Word documents full of ideas that you will never find again? Do you have many plans and ideas that you just never get to? Does the idea of getting organized make you uncomfortable and a little bit nervous? If so, then this guide is for you.



## Identifying Your Organizing Style

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

- **Neat Nelly** -- She puts everything away out of sight, however the term neat can be questioned. She feels neat because it's all out of sight and out of mind.
- **Piles Polly** -- She puts everything out where everyone can see it, usually in piles all over the place. She cannot find anything when she needs it.
- **Basket Betty** -- She puts everything into baskets so that they look neat and out of sight, but they are anything but neat (and maybe not even out of sight).

Understanding your organizational style will help you move forward with creating a system of organization that works for you. Working with your personality, instead of against it, will make becoming more organized a lot simpler. So, it doesn't matter whether or not you pile everything up, stuff everything out of sight, or have lots of baskets and bins with all your work in them. 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 organizational 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?

Anyway, 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 realize 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 really 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

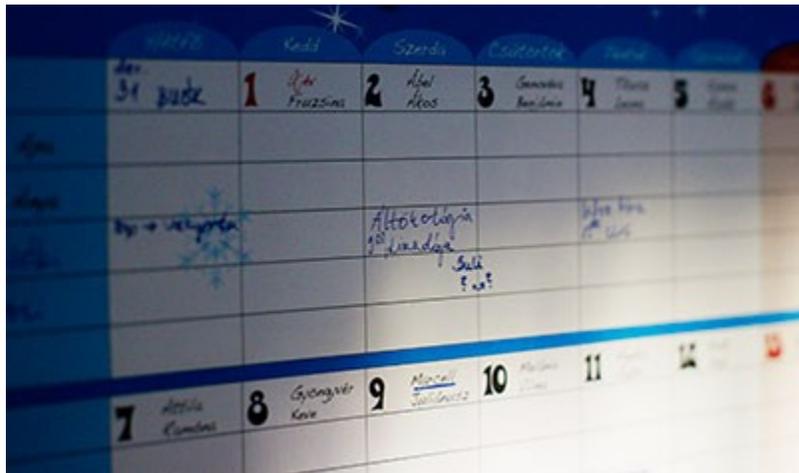
Face it, some things you put off because you simply don't like to do it. Cleaning out the oven, the fridge, and matching socks comes to mind. How about that expense report for work? Yea, it's boring. So you procrastinate because you simply do not want to do it to start with. You wait until the very last moment to do it, maybe you're even late with it, or don't do it at all. This can be a real problem in the workplace and at home.

## 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 household organizing, 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.

## You Don't Like to Say No

A lot of disorganized 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.



## You're Overwhelmed

It's not uncommon to start putting things off when you simply get in over your head. Due to poor organizational 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 overwhelmed, it seems easier to just ignore anything that needs to be done.

## You're a Dreamer & 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, but if you don't back that up with some action, you're not productive. You're all talk and no action.

## **Inability to Visualize 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 organizing 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 another saying that goes like this: Name it, Claim it. Both of these are very 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 disorganized procrastinator, you'll be stuck forever.

Sometimes disorganization or procrastination is situational. In severe cases it's chronic. Whether you're chronically disorganized or situationally disorganized, the fix is the same. Develop a plan, create systems, and then follow them. Ironically, doing this will rid you of both disorganization 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 or in Evernote or Word on your computer. 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.

## **Compartmentalize 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 trash can, and without sitting down toss the trash, and keep the rest. Then you will take the rest to your office, or wherever it is that you have designated to deal with mail.

Deal with the mail only once. Write out checks for bills, or schedule an online payment, note on the bill the actions you took, record in your checkbook register the amounts, if needed, and file it away. Other types of mail that aren't trash read immediately and file away in your chosen filing method or you may decide that it goes in the circular file known as trash after all.

## **Create & Automate Routines**

Part of overcoming disorganization 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, ensuring that you only handle it once. As you do this more often, it will become a routine.



You can further automate this process if you want to by asking that your bills are sent via email and using online banking to schedule all payments based around your paychecks and when the bills are due. This can save hours of your month when it comes to dealing with mail and bills. There are many other things you can turn into a routine and automate in your life besides mail and bills.

## **Organizing Household Chores**

Create a master chore list with all chores to be done broken down in a schedule that has various family members designated to do certain tasks. Don't leave your name off the chore list

and do "everything else", no, put yourself on the chore list too, and make the chore list very specific, leaving nothing out or left to chance.

List all the menial and tedious jobs such as sweeping the kitchen floor, wiping down the counters, and cleaning the bathroom mirror on the chore list. List daily tasks, weekly tasks, monthly tasks, and even tasks that you only do once or twice a year, including getting the oil changed in the car, or spring cleaning. 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 for household chores that will work.

### **Getting Organized at Work**

Being organized at work can be an important ingredient in getting promotions. If you are procrastinating and show disorganization 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 garbage is surrounding your work station, management might take notice.

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

### **Remember the different organizational styles:**

- **Neat Nelly** -- She puts everything away out of sight, however the term neat can be questioned.
- **Piles Polly** -- She puts everything out where everyone can see it, usually in piles all over the place.
- **Basket Betty** -- She puts everything into baskets so that they look neat but yet out of sight.

If you happen to be a Neat Nelly, 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 Evernote, Calendars and the Filofax.

Over the years you've tricked your brain to thinking you're doing a lot of work because you file it all away. 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 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 pin board, or a computerized system like Evernote to post messages and items that you need to remember easily. Truly process paper before filing.

If you often leave everything out like Piles Polly does, then you need to create a system using your natural organizational methods to your advantage. Instead of just throwing piles right on your desk, create a labeling system using standing files, trays or bins. Label each tray: "Needs Processed" for things you must enter into the computer. "To Be Filed" for things that need to go in the filing system. Label each bin or tray with the action you need to take on the papers. Then create a schedule in which you will accomplish those tasks.



Set aside a specific time each day, week or month (depending on the importance of each) to process each tray or bin. As you clear each



bin, file the items away as needed or throw away as needed. This way, you only touch each piece of paper coming out of each tray or bin once. If you set up a schedule to deal with all the paper, 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 easily just print it out because you've been entering your

expenses each day as they occurred. Easy peasy. In addition, if it makes you feel better to see things out around you, you can also use a pin board, or a program like Evernote to keep important "to-do's" and information at your fingertips.

If you happen to fall into the role of Basket Betty, you may find that it will be a lot easier for you to get your disorganization under control. Simply label your baskets as in the example of trays or bins above, which are labeled 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 organizational style will also benefit greatly from using technology to keep things organized 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 organized manner so that you can find it easily using your PC or mobile device.



### **Finally, follow these tips to help you stay organized at home or work:**

1. **Purge Often** -- One sure way to get more organized 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 with Evernote, or just throwing unneeded things away.
2. **KISS** -- Keep it simple sweetie 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 organization 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 organized. Learn software such as Evernote, use containers outside of their intended use, and use your imagination to create organization.
4. **Clean Up Every Day** -- Use baskets to help you transport things to their "home", but don't keep the things in the basket for weeks at a time. Clear your desk off before going home after finishing your work.
5. **Keep a Calendar** -- Writing things down is the best way to ensure that you get things done. You can use paper and a pin board, or you can use a program like Evernote, or even Google Calendar. However you choose to keep your calendar, 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 organization might get off track. Just stay aware.

Whether at home, at work, or inside your car, all these organizational tips will help you not only get organized but also help eliminate procrastination. If your world is more orderly, and you can see at a glance what needs to be done, by looking at your schedule, 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. However it happens, you find yourself back into your old habits of disorganization 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 start from now climbing your way back up the mountain.

- **Be Honest With Yourself** -- Look into yourself about 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 disorganization?
- **Start Small** -- Tackle one small thing to get it reorganized. It's especially important to go back and reorganize the things you've already organized 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 minutia, 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 disorganization. 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 disorganization and procrastination be what works. Because, it doesn't really work; it's an illusion.

Take heart that you've noticed and realize 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 organizing 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 has to be. A lot of disorganized 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 ABC's.

### **A -- Take Action**

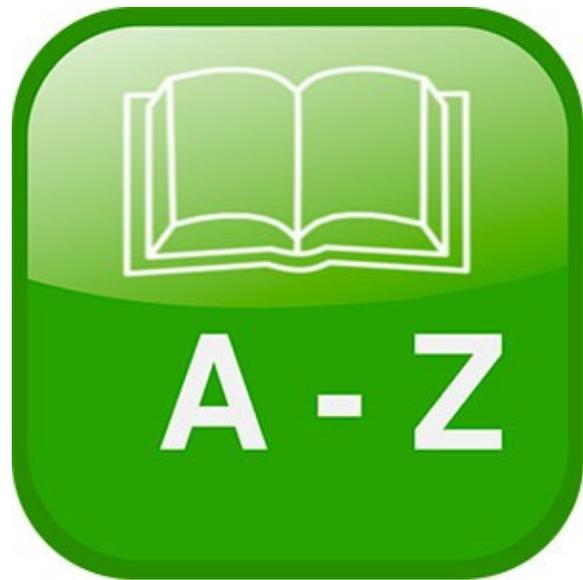
Since a lot of procrastinators tend to believe that they don't know enough and that is what causes them to not do things, it may seem impossible to simply take action. But the truth is, you've spent enough time learning, you know what to do. You're going to learn even more from doing than you are from 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 organize your desk? Start with simply throwing away anything that is really garbage. 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 organization to your home.



## **In Conclusion**

Letting go of procrastination and getting organized 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 organized. Getting organized 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.