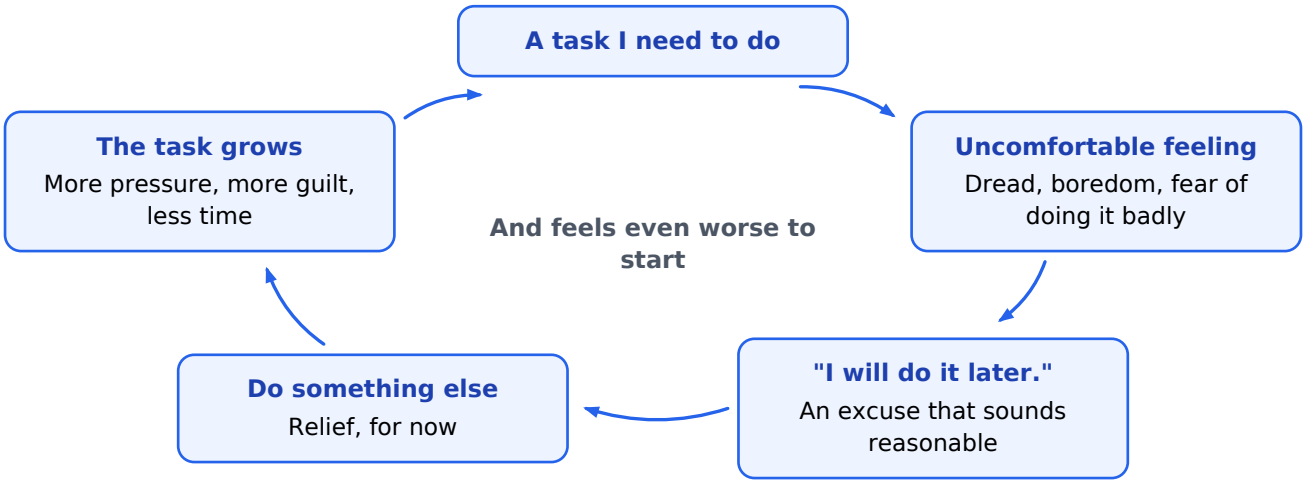
Understanding procrastination

Why we put things off, and ways to get started.

Procrastination is delaying something you intend to do, even though you know the delay will cost you. It is rarely a problem with time management. Usually it is a way of escaping how the task makes you feel: bored, overwhelmed, anxious, not good enough.



What makes a task easy to put off

- [ ] It is vague, or I do not know where to begin
- [ ] It feels huge
- [ ] I am afraid of doing it badly
- [ ] It is boring
- [ ] The deadline is far away
- [ ] I resent having to do it
- [ ] I am tired or low
- [ ] There is something more appealing to hand

Ways through

1. **Make the first step tiny and specific.** "Open the document and write the title."
2. **Five minutes only.** Then decide whether to continue.
3. **Name the feeling.** "I am avoiding this because I am scared it will not be good." Feelings shrink a little when named.
4. **Catch the excuse.** "I work better under pressure" is rarely true.
5. **Set the scene.** Phone in another room. One tab open.
6. **Fix a time and a place.** "At 10, at the kitchen table."
7. **Be kind about past delay.** Self-criticism makes the task more unpleasant and the avoidance stronger.

> **Note**
> You do not need to feel ready before you start. The feeling of being ready usually comes after you have begun.

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Procrastination: excuses and replies

The things we tell ourselves to let ourselves off, and what to say back.

Name _____ Date _____

Most procrastination starts with a thought that makes putting it off sound sensible.

The excuse	A reply
"I am not in the mood."	"I do not have to be. Mood usually follows once I start."
"I work better under pressure."	"I work faster under pressure. It is not better, and it is stressful."
"I have plenty of time."	"Starting now gives me room for things to go wrong."
"I need to do X first."	"Is that needed, or is it a way of avoiding?"
"It has to be done properly, and I do not have a clear run."	"Twenty rough minutes now beats a perfect afternoon that never comes."
"I am too tired."	"I can do five minutes tired."
"I do not know where to start."	"I will start anywhere and tidy it up later."

My excuse	My reply

The task I am putting off most right now

The first two-minute step, and when I will do it

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