

Dealing with Distractions

Most of us procrastinate to some degree. It is when we are unaware that we are procrastinating, that it causes the biggest problem.

Distractions can be real (e.g. your child needs your attention), but they can also be displacement or replacement activities, or ways of procrastinating in disguise.

Know the difference between distractions you have to deal with, and those that are aiding your procrastination.

Try to keep a log of how you spend your time, it may help to identify your distractions.

What do your common distractions look like?

They may include:

- Social Media
- Phone
- Email
- Friends / Family
- Music
- Television
- Gaming
- Pets

Work out what stops you from working, if you're struggling to keep motivated, try working with someone else who may help to keep you on track. Mutual support can be a great way of encouraging each other to work.

Some people may say they need the pressure of a tight deadline to begin writing an assignment. Ask yourself whether this way of working is effective or whether it is disguised procrastination. You may find you produce better work under less stress if you start earlier.

Bringing deadlines forward in your diary will help give you a buffer zone and may also encourage you to start working earlier.

Where does your time go?

Watching television: Most televisions have a record function now or catch-up facility, there is therefore no excuse to not watch later. Use television as a reward for completing tasks, you will enjoy watching it, rather than feeling guilty that you should be working instead.

Social media: If you know you are distracted by notifications, then keep your phone away from you whilst you study. Or, download an app that will allow you to set a time limit for when you can access certain apps.

Friends / Family: Whilst the input of family and friends undeniably brings many positives, during times of study it can be difficult to balance their potential demands on your time against competing deadlines. Explaining your workload to others and asking for understanding if you are not available, can be the first step to balancing your commitments. Friends and family are also then better able to support you.

Ultimately, you need to be honest about how you spend your time and look for ways to improve this. Improving your willpower to avoid distractions is often the best place to start.