
TOMORROW'S PROFESSOR(sm) eMAIL NEWSLETTER

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Ten Ways of Thinking that Lead to Writing Procrastination -and Rebuttals to Those Thoughts

* ***I need to warm up first by writing some email.***

** **Rebuttal:** You can warm up by starting the work slowly, making a list of what you will do, reading over your notes or writing from yesterday.

* ***I'm not in a good mood and I don't write well when I'm not in a good mood - I'll do it later when I feel better.***

** **Rebuttal:** Nothing will make you feel as good as getting something done. The main reason for your bad mood is that you don't really want to do this task, so getting it out of the way will feel great.

* ***Life is so hard - I can't believe I have to do this unpleasant task. I'll even it out by doing something more fun first.***

** **Rebuttal:** Yes, life is hard, and it's terrible that you have to do this task. That's why you will reward yourself after you do the task. Otherwise you're applying backwards conditioning, which doesn't work. And don't forget to plan enough fun and relaxation time into your schedule.

* ***I'll definitely do it, in a minute or so***

** **Rebuttal:** Set a timer, or that minute could last 2 hours. When the timer goes off, do the task. Even better, do it now!

* ***After this bad thing is over in my life (midterms, meeting, in-law visit, etc.) my life will seem easier and I'll be able to do my task on a daily basis. So I'll wait until then.***

** **Rebuttal:** Life is always like this. You can afford to do 15 minutes of work today, can't you? This is the one small act you can do to make your life a little better.

* ***I just don't feel like it***

** **Rebuttal:** So what? Do it anyway! If you wait until you feel like it, the task will get done in 10 years if you're lucky. The only way to make yourself feel like it is to get started and get into the flow of the work.

* ***Why do just a little today - I'll do double tomorrow - I work better when I feel pressure anyway.***

** **Rebuttal:** It's a fallacy that you work better under pressure. It's not true, because anxiety reduces creativity and clear thinking. And doing double the next day will backfire. You will feel less like doing it tomorrow because you've decided you must do double the work, and it will seem more overwhelming and less appealing, so you're even more likely to put it off until the next day.

*** I can only work in one place (the library, a café, my office) and that place isn't available or I can't get there - so there's no point in working at all.**

**** Rebuttal:** You'd be surprised how much work you can get done no matter where you are. Even if you don't have your laptop with you, you can pull out a scrap of paper and write down a few notes on what you'd like to accomplish in the section you've been working on. Try it!

*** I'm not sure how to do this - I don't know how sitting down and writing will enable me to do it -- it's just hopeless so why even start?**

**** Rebuttal:** If you're not clear enough on what to do, writing may be the only way to get you out of this state. If you truly need help from someone else on this problem, you need to write down the questions clearly. The process of writing them down may clarify the issue for you.

*** I didn't write well yesterday, so today will be terrible.**

**** Rebuttal:** Often bad writing days are followed by better ones. The reason to write daily is that your brain is still plugging away on it while you're doing other things or sleeping. So you may surprise yourself today!

Questions? Send an email to help@academicladder.com and we'll be happy to help.

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