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Read this article about procrastination.

Seize the Day

Picture this scenario: It's late Sunday afternoon. Jane is making dinner. Ben needs the paperwork for this year's taxes. It has **to be given** to the accountant tomorrow.

BEN: Jane, have you got the paperwork ready for the taxes? I have **to take** it to the accountant first thing in the morning.

JANE: Ben, the Garcias are coming in about an hour. I'm trying **to get** dinner into the oven. I can't stop **to find** the paperwork now.

BEN: But honey, I've got **to have** it. You said you'd do it.

JANE: Why didn't you tell me you needed it tonight? I didn't know I had **to get** it together so soon.

BEN: I really did plan **to remind** you about it, but I **forgot to**. What are we going **to do**? Can't you stop for a little while?

JANE: If I stop cooking, I won't have enough time **to finish** before the Garcias get here. Tell you what: you go look for it, and if you can't find it, I'll help you later this evening.

Does this kind of situation ring a bell?¹ It illustrates the problem of procrastination.

I interviewed psychiatrist Robert Stevens **to find out** more about this problem.

REPORTER: Dr. Stevens, I want **to ask** you if there's such a thing as a procrastination syndrome.

STEVENS: Well, I don't know if we can call it a syndrome, but procrastination is widespread and can be a very serious problem for some people.

REPORTER: Can we start with a definition of procrastination?

STEVENS: Of course. **To procrastinate** is literally **to put things off** until tomorrow. It's a postponing of events until a later time. But unlike the word "postpone," which has a neutral sense, the word "procrastinate" has a negative connotation. There are sometimes good reasons **to postpone** things, but never **to procrastinate**. Procrastinating has the sense of avoidance.

REPORTER: All right. Now what causes people **to procrastinate**? Laziness?

STEVENS: That's a popular idea, but I'd have **to say** that laziness isn't the major cause. No, I think that fear is really the most important force that motivates people **to put things off**.

REPORTER: Fear? Can you explain?

STEVENS: Well, procrastinators want **to live up** to other people's expectations. They're afraid **to fail** or **make** mistakes, or maybe they don't want **to be rejected**. Interestingly, procrastination has nothing **to do** with education. Some of the most learned people are among the worst procrastinators.

REPORTER: What would be an example of that?

STEVENS: Well, let's see . . . Suppose a professor—a woman we'll call Blanche—has been planning a lecture. She's mentioned the lecture to colleagues but hasn't told them the time and date it will take place, which would be the straightforward thing **to do**. Either consciously or

