

READ

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.

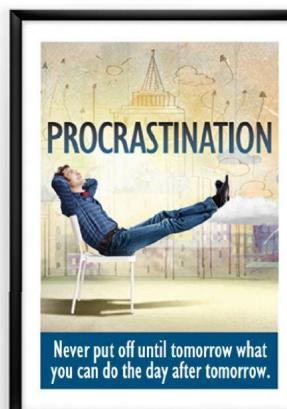
REPORTER: What would be an example of that?

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 subconsciously, she expects **to fail**, so she delays telling people until the very last moment. Her colleagues expected her to **tell them** before now. When she didn't, they forgot about the event and made other plans. It's too short notice for most of them to **come**. Blanche's fear has caused things to **turn out** like this. She feels bad about it, but she doesn't know **how to change**.

REPORTER: Well, what if a procrastinator would like **to change**? What would you advise that person **to do**?

STEVENS: Getting a procrastinator **to change** can be a tough nut **to crack**,² but I recommend three principles for my clients. The first is **never to put off** until tomorrow what needs **to be done** today. **Not to avoid** painful or difficult things is the second. They're part of life. The third is contained in the Latin phrase *carpe diem*—“seize the day.” I try to consider every experience an opportunity. I don't want people to **take unnecessary** or foolish risks, but I do advise them **not to put off** living. They may not get another chance.

REPORTER: Well, Dr. Stevens, thanks for a stimulating discussion.



1 *ring a bell*: remind you of something

2 *a tough nut to crack*: a difficult problem to solve

AFTER YOU READ

A VOCABULARY Match the words in **bold** with their meanings.

— 1. Picture this scenario.	a. cause
— 2. The word postpone has a neutral sense.	b. direct and simple
— 3. Procrastination is widespread .	c. meaning
— 4. The word procrastinate has a negative connotation.	d. common
— 5. This situation illustrates the problem of procrastination .	e. possible situation
— 6. That would be the straightforward thing to do.	f. shows the meaning of
— 7. Is there such a thing as a procrastination syndrome ?	g. not showing feelings
— 8. Fear can motivate people to put things off.	h. pattern of behavior

B COMPREHENSION Read the statements. Check (✓) *True* or *False*.

	True	False
1. Jane is not going to stop dinner preparations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The word postpone has a positive sense.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. To procrastinate is literally to put things off until tomorrow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Dr. Stevens believes it is sometimes appropriate to procrastinate .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Dr. Stevens believes that fear is the major cause of procrastination .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. According to Dr. Stevens, procrastinators are afraid to fail .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Dr. Stevens believes it is permissible to avoid difficult or painful things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Dr. Stevens thinks it is good to consider every experience an opportunity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>