Procrastinate vs. putting off doing something until a future time. [In Latin: *pr ó cr à stin à re* means "to put forward until tomorrow."]

Tempted to put off studying for the particle physics test? Or writing that 35-page research paper on future uses of nanotechnology? Sure, you are—and who wouldn't be? But it's still dumb to procrastinate at college. Here's why...

**Tomorrow won't be better.** *It'll still be the* same task. It won't be any more fun and you still won't want to do it.

**It only gets worse.** As the deadline gets closer and closer, the task starts to loom larger and larger. And the stress mounts. Now, not only do you have to write that dreaded paper, you have to do it under the influence of your fight-or-flight hormones, which are designed to help you escape from a saber-toothed tiger and aren't of as much use when you're attempting to write coherent prose.

**Ideas need time to jell.** Most college papers require you to have some kind of idea, then to spend some time thinking about it, revising it, and refining it. When you throw together a paper at the last minute, your ideas are half-baked. And your professor—like anybody who has eaten a stomach-turning hamburger still frozen in the center—will know it.

**Professor's perspective.** Ever wonder why the professor assigns the paper two weeks before it's due? It's mostly because he or she expects you to be thinking about the issue, or doing the research, for two weeks. No, not every waking moment. Just some of the time. After all, the prof could just as easily have given the assignment one week before it was due, if he or she expected less thinking.

**You blow off your chances for help.** If you leave your studying until the night before the test, you give up the possibility of getting input from your professor or TA. Professors regularly dispense sage advice—or at least a few useful tips—during office hours. Unfortunately, they usually don't hold them at midnight the night before the midterm, when you suddenly discover you have no idea how to do the problems that will count for two thirds of the grade.
**You're playing without a full deck.** After a professor assigns a paper topic, he or she often brings up material in class designed to help you with the assignment. If you haven't even begun to think about the assignment, you might not even notice. Wonder how this might go? Well, if you don't realize the paper topic is about the Civil War, you end up skipping—or zoning out—during the class on the Civil War, which just happened, by an amazing twist of fate, to come up exactly two days after the topic was assigned. Yeah, it's majorly unfair, but that's the kind of thing professors like to do.

**You put yourself at a strategic disadvantage.** While you're finding reasons to put things off for another day, some of your cohorts have already burst out of the starting gate, even those duplicitous traitors who assure you that they haven't cracked a book. And those jerks will end up making you look bad, especially if the professor curves the grades.

**Time becomes a factor.** If you put things off to the last minute, you might find that you haven't budgeted enough minutes to finish the necessary tasks. It's the easiest thing in the world to underestimate how long it'll take to do all the stuff—especially when new issues arise as you're thinking through your paper argument or sketching out answers to possible midterm questions. So, you wind up like those inept football teams that can't get the field goal off because time has just run out.

**S---happens.** When you procrastinate you don't allow yourself time for those various life events that adversely affect your ability to complete your work. Like sicknesses, your printer breaking down, your computer crashing, your grandmother dying, your car breaking down on the way to get your printer fixed, your dog dying, your grandmother poisoning your dog, and what have you.

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