How to beat procrastination and get stuff done
During this session we’ll go through the following topics:

• How to beat procrastination and manage your time effectively?
• How to set up goals and divide them into smaller tasks?
• How to motivate yourself when you feel your energy is running low?
Simple formula for beating procrastination

Put simply, making progress requires you to set goals that motivate you personally, manage your time effectively and sticking to the plans you’ve made.
Warm-up exercise

Procrastination: unnecessarily postponing decisions or actions.

In what kind of situations do you tend to procrastinate? Try to bring to mind a specific occasion from this semester.
Why we procrastinate

- Human beings have the tendency to avoid uncomfortable situations
- Reliance on self-control which is not an endless source of energy
- Experiencing demotivating factors such as anxiety, worry, fear of failure
- Sometimes we prioritize things in a way that makes us set a certain task aside.
Why is procrastination so closely connected with studying?

1. There is a considerate time gap between the task and the reward. In the academic world many things take time and consistency (e.g. writing your thesis).
2. It’s typical for Uni students to claim to be motivated by deadlines. This gives an unrealistic image of how people tackle complicated tasks.
3. Uncertainly about the task or fear of not reaching the wanted standard.
4. If you only think about the task as a large entity, it might seem overwhelming. Where do I even start?
Why you shouldn’t leave everything to the last minute

• Putting off something for a long time will eventually make the task seem more unpleasant than it actually is. Not only will you feel the pressure of finishing the task, but also guilty that you haven’t started yet.
• You can rarely enjoy the activities you’re doing on "borrowed time"
  • Better to first get the daily tasks done and then properly enjoy your free time, right?
• It causes stress that could be easily avoided.
• If you need advice from a teacher, it’s better to ask for it in advance. Feedback is only useful if you have time to react to it.
• If you do it enough times, it might become your default strategy, especially if it seems to be working. There are many areas of time where putting things off to the future can be very detrimental though.
Setting up motivating goals

If you have difficulties in setting goals, consider the following:

1. **Why are you taking this course/learning this skill?**
   1. The importance of inner motivation cannot be overstated – we enjoy doing things we find meaningful and fulfilling.
   2. Tip: If it’s a mandatory part of your studies, try to come up at least a few reasons how the content will benefit you.
   3. You can also use external motivation as a tool; rewards, “peer-pressure”

2. **Is your goal SMART?**
   - Specific
   - Measurable
   - Attainable
   - Relevant
   - Time-bound

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Achieving goals

• Divide your goals into smaller, concrete tasks
  • E.g. If you have to write an essay, use a mindmap or another tool to map out the different steps (e.g. questions that you want to answer).
  • Create a schedule for these subgoals; you can e.g. decide that your first draft is ready in two weeks and then work backwards to align the smaller steps

• Identify obstacles and find solutions
  • What is the "friction" that prevents you from starting the task?
  • If you are feeling anxiety or uncertainty, try to analyze why.

• Make time for the execution of the tasks (=time management)
Exercise: Intentional goal setting (10 min)

Choose one goal you would like to see fulfilled this semester. Then write down the different stages and the practical steps you have to take to succeed. You can also list possible obstacles and their solutions.

Main goal: Finishing Global politics essay

• Stage one: Finding my topic
  • What will I actually do in this stage: Going through my lecture notes & Moodle discussions, browsing course books etc.
  • Obstacles: Which topic will be good enough?
  • Solution: If I find it interesting, I’m more motivated to finish the essay, so I’ll see if topic X will work

• Stage two: Finding sources.....

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Time management ja motivation

Setting daily/weekly tasks is key to time management, but there are also other tools you can use
1. Time limits on tasks (effective working)
2. Work with friends!
3. Do the most difficult task first thing—our self-control decreases during the day
4. Start small—it’s better to do fifteen minutes of work now than postpone the task completely
5. Multitasking is a big no-no
6. Schedule breaks, recovery time and sleep
7. Apps for time management (e.g. Trello), Pomodoro technique

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Routines as a base for productivity

Just a few recommendations for habit building: use them and loose them if they don’t work for you!

• Change your environment
  • Hide/block distractions, make study material easily available
• If-then
  • E.g. If I go to the kitchen, i will also revise three key terms for my exam
• Accountability
  • Tell your family and friends; get an accountability partner
• Two-day rule
  • Don’t skip two days in a row
Study support

The University different services to help with issues and questions you might have with studying (or career)

• [Studies and Career Chats](#)
• [Study psychologists](#)
• [A boost to studies and career groups](#)
Summary: How to beat procrastination

- Get rid of the guilt! We all procrastinate at times.
- Linking it back to your goals: Why do I find this important?
- Better done than perfect: Not all your works have to be masterpieces
- Success builds on success: When you get one small task done, your confidence gets a boost which helps you finish the rest
- Start building routines. Doing things on a systematically saves energy and gets rid of a lot of “I don’t want to” friction