

Writing Prompt and Passages

Write an argumentative essay for a science magazine taking a position on whether or not procrastination can be an effective tool for getting things done. Your essay must be based upon ideas, concepts, and information that can be determined through analysis of the two passages.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- Plan your essay
- Write your essay

Be sure to

- Include a claim
- Address counterclaims
- Use evidence from multiple sources
- Avoid over relying on one source

Your written response should be in the form of a multi-paragraph essay. Spend about 90 minutes on this essay, including the time you spend reading the passage(s), planning, and writing your essay.

from "This Was Supposed to Be My Column for New Year's Day"

by John Tierney

- 1 For the past 5 years, or maybe it's more like 10, I've been meaning to publish a New Year's Day column offering a bold resolution for the coming year: "The Power of Positive Procrastination ¹."*
- 2 Well, Jan. 15 is close enough, especially if you still haven't gotten around to dealing with this year's resolutions. And you can stop feeling guilty for procrastinating. Science has come up with a defense of your condition.*
- 3 Researchers have independently identified the phenomenon of positive procrastination, although there's some disagreement on what to call it. "Structured procrastination" is the preferred term of John Perry, a philosopher at Stanford who published a book about it last year. Admittedly, it's not a long book (92 quite small pages), but give him credit: He got it done, and only 17 years after he identified the concept.*
- 4 Dr. Perry was a typical self-hating procrastinator until it occurred to him in 1995 that he wasn't entirely lazy. When he put off grading papers, he didn't just sit around idly; he would sharpen pencils or work in the garden or play Ping-Pong with students. "Procrastinators," he realized, "seldom do absolutely nothing."*
- 5 A modest insight, perhaps, but it eased his conscience and disabused²him of the old idea that procrastinators should limit commitments. The key to productivity, he argues in *The Art of Procrastination*, is to make more commitments—but to be methodical about it.*
- 6 At the top of your to-do list, put a couple of daunting, if not impossible, tasks that are vaguely important-sounding (but really aren't) and seem to have deadlines (but really don't). Then, farther down the list, include some doable tasks that really matter.*
- 7 "Doing these tasks becomes a way of not doing the things higher up on the list," Dr. Perry writes. "With this sort of appropriate task structure, the procrastinator becomes a useful citizen. Indeed, the procrastinator can even acquire, as I have, a reputation for getting a lot done."*
- 8 Dr. Perry generously acknowledges that he has stood on the shoulders of giants, in particular Robert*

Benchley, the Algonquin Round Table member. In 1930, Benchley revealed how he mustered the willpower to pore through scientific magazines and build a bookshelf when an article was due.

- 9 "The secret of my incredible energy and efficiency in getting work done is a simple one," he wrote. "The psychological principle is this: anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment."
- 10 You can also call this "productive procrastination," the term used by Piers Steel, a psychologist at the University of Calgary. It's his personal favorite of the dozens of techniques he cataloged while researching his 2011 book, *The Procrastination Equation*.
- 11 "For most of us, procrastination can be beaten down, but not entirely beaten," Dr. Steel told me, describing how one of his scholarly papers on procrastination took him a decade to write. "My best trick is to play my projects off against each other, procrastinating on one by working on another."
- 12 Dr. Steel says it's based on sound principles of behavioral psychology: "We are willing to pursue any vile task as long as it allows us to avoid something worse." He gives theoretical credit to Sir Francis Bacon, the 17th-century philosopher, whose self-control strategy was to "set affection against affection, and to master one by another; even as we use to hunt beast with beast."
- 13 Dr. Steel, who has surveyed more than 24,000 people around the world, says that 95 percent of people confess to at least occasional procrastination. (You can gauge yourself by taking his survey at *Procrastinus.com*.) About 25 percent of those surveyed are chronic procrastinators, five times the rate in the 1970s.
- 14 He attributes the increase to the changing nature of the workplace: the more flexible that jobs become, the more opportunities to avoid unpleasant tasks. Workers now typically spend a quarter of the day procrastinating, students a third of the day. Men are more likely than women to be chronic procrastinators, especially young men.
- 15 How many of them are actually being productive about it? Alas, there's no good data, and for now many self-control researchers have doubts about positive procrastination. Even when it works, they say, you're still wasting energy as you fret, consciously or unconsciously, about the task you're avoiding.
- 16 And while Robert Benchley may have built that bookshelf, Raymond Chandler strikes many experts as a better role model. Chandler used the same insight of Dr. Perry—that procrastinators rarely sit around absolutely idle—to develop a strategy that Roy F. Baumeister, a social psychologist at Florida State (and my co-author of a book on willpower) calls the *Nothing Alternative*. Chandler forced himself to write detective stories by setting aside four hours a day and following two rules:
- a) You don't have to write.
b) You can't do anything else.
- 17 "It's the same principle as keeping order in a school," Chandler explained. "If you make the pupils behave, they will learn something just to keep from being bored."

¹**procrastination:** the act of postponing or putting off until a later date

²**disabuse:** to inform a person so as to enlighten or free from illusion

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Excerpt from "This Was Supposed to Be My Column for New Year's Day," by John Tierney, from *The New York Times*. January 14, 2013.

from "The Procrastination Doom Loop—and How to Break It"

by Derek Thompson

Delaying hard work is all about your mood.

- 20** . . . Productive people sometimes confuse the difference between reasonable delay and true procrastination. The former can be useful ("I'll respond to this email when I have more time to write it"). The latter is, by definition, self-defeating ("I should respond to this email right now, and I have time, and my fingers are on the keys, and the Internet connection is perfectly strong, and nobody is asking me to do anything else, but I just . . . don't . . . feel like it.").
- 21** When scientists have studied procrastination, they've typically focused on how people are miserable at weighing costs and benefits across time. For example, everybody recognizes, in the abstract, that it's important to go to the dentist every few months. The pain is upfront and obvious—dental work is torture—and the rewards of cleaner teeth are often remote, so we allow the appointment to slip through our minds and off our calendars. Across several categories including dieting, saving money, and sending important emails, we constantly choose short and small rewards (whose benefits are dubious, but immediate) over longer and larger payouts (whose benefits are obvious, but distant).
- 22** In the last few years, however, scientists have begun to think that procrastination might have less to do with time than emotion. Procrastination "really has nothing to do with time-management," Joseph Ferrari, a professor of psychology at DePaul University, told *Psychological Science*. "To tell the chronic procrastinator to just do it would be like saying to a clinically depressed person, cheer up."
- 23** Instead, Ferrari and others think procrastination happens for two basic reasons: (1) We delay action because we feel like we're in the wrong mood to complete a task, and (2) We assume that our mood will change in the near future. See if you recognize any of these excuses. . . .
- If I take a nap now, I'll have more focus later.
 - If I eat this cake now, that'll be my cheat for the month, and I'll have more willpower.
 - If I send a few Tweets now, my fingers will be used to typing sentences, which will make this article easier to write.
 - If I watch TV now, I'll feel relaxed and more likely to call the doctor's office tomorrow morning.
- 24** This approach isn't merely self-defeating. It also creates a procrastination doom loop. Putting off an important task makes us feel anxious, guilty, and even ashamed, Eric Jaffe wrote. Anxiety, guilt, and shame make us less likely to have the emotional and cognitive energy to be productive. That makes us even less likely to begin the task, in the first place. Which makes us feel guilty. Which makes us less productive. And around we go.
- 25** One thing that can cut through the doom loop is the inescapable pressure of an impending deadline. So what's the best way to design deadlines to make us more productive?
- 26** People often schedule reminders to complete a project significantly before the deadline, so they have time to complete it. But this strategy often backfires. Some practiced procrastinators are both "present-biased" (they choose ESPN.com or BuzzFeed over work every time) and overconfident about their ability to remember important tasks, according to a new paper by Keith M. Marzilli Ericson. As a result, they often put off assignments, only to forget about it until long after the deadline. Procrastination and forgetfulness are bad, independently. Together, they're a double-headed meteor hammer smashing your productivity to tiny little bits.
- 27** To hack your way to productivity, you could schedule one-shot reminders as late as possible—even slightly after you were supposed to start the project. Not only will the last-second reminder and looming deadline break the doom loop and shock you into action, but also it won't give you time to put off—and, potentially, forget about—the task.

28 For pathological procrastinators, recognizing that we need deadlines to bind ourselves to our responsibilities is the first step. The second step is recognizing that our own deadlines are less effective than other people's deadlines.

29 In one famous experiment, Dan Ariely hired 60 students to proofread three passages. One group got a weekly deadline for each passage, a second group got one deadline for all three readings, and the third group chose their own deadlines. Readers were rewarded for the errors they found and penalized a dollar for each day they were late. Group II performed the worst. The group with external deadlines performed the best. "People strategically try to curb [procrastination] by using costly self-imposed deadlines," Ariely and his co-author Klaus Wertenbroch concluded, "and [they] are not always as effective as some external deadlines."

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Excerpt from "The Procrastination Doom Loop—and How to Break It," by Derek Thompson, from *The Atlantic*. August 26, 2014.

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Score	Development	Focus & Organization	Language	Conventions
4	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient evidence¹ from the stimuli to thoroughly and insightfully support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). thoroughly and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, connecting the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating a clear, insightful understanding of the topic and the stimuli. 	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains an effective and relevant introduction. states and maintains a clear and sophisticated argument. utilizes effective organizational strategies to logically sequence claim(s), counterclaim(s), reasons, and evidence to create a unified whole. effectively clarifies relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s) to create cohesion. contains an effective and relevant concluding statement or section. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> illustrates consistent and sophisticated command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary appropriate to the task. illustrates sophisticated command of syntactic variety for meaning and reader interest. utilizes sophisticated and varied transitional words and phrases. effectively establishes and maintains a formal style and an objective tone. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates consistent and sophisticated command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.² may contain a few minor errors that do not interfere with meaning.
3	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes relevant and sufficient evidence¹ from the stimuli to adequately support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). adequately and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, connecting the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating a sufficient understanding of the topic and the stimuli. 	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a relevant introduction. states and maintains a clear argument. utilizes adequate organizational strategies to logically sequence claim(s), counterclaim(s), reasons, and evidence to create a mostly unified whole. clarifies most relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s), but there may be some gaps in cohesion. contains a relevant concluding statement or section. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> illustrates consistent command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary appropriate to the task. illustrates consistent command of syntactic variety for meaning and reader interest. utilizes appropriate and varied transitional words and phrases. establishes and maintains a formal style and an objective tone. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates consistent command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.² contains some minor and/or major errors, but the errors do not significantly interfere with meaning.
2	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes mostly relevant but insufficient evidence¹ from the stimuli to partially support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). Some evidence may be inaccurate or repetitive. explains some of the evidence provided, connecting some of the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating only a partial understanding of the topic and the stimuli. There may be some level of inaccuracy in the explanation. 	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains a limited introduction. states a weak argument. demonstrates an attempt to use organizational strategies to sequence claim(s), counterclaim(s), reasons, and evidence, but ideas may be hard to follow at times. clarifies some relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s), but there are lapses in focus. contains a limited concluding statement or section. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> illustrates inconsistent command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary. illustrates inconsistent command of syntactic variety. utilizes basic or repetitive transitional words and phrases. establishes but inconsistently maintains a formal style and an objective tone. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates inconsistent command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.² contains many errors that may significantly interfere with meaning.
1	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> utilizes mostly irrelevant or no evidence¹ from the stimuli, or mostly/only personal knowledge to inadequately support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). Evidence is inaccurate or repetitive. inadequately or inaccurately explains the evidence provided; evidence, claim(s), and counterclaim(s) appear disconnected, demonstrating little understanding of the topic and the stimuli. 	<p>In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contains no or an irrelevant introduction. states an unclear argument. demonstrates an unclear organizational structure; ideas are hard to follow most of the time. fails to clarify relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s); concepts are unclear and/or there is a lack of focus. contains no or an irrelevant concluding statement or section. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> illustrates little to no use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary. illustrates little to no syntactic variety. utilizes no or few transitional words and phrases. does not establish or maintain a formal style and an objective tone. 	<p>The writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrates limited command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.² contains numerous and repeated errors that seriously impede meaning.

¹ Evidence includes facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information, using accurate and credible sources as appropriate to the task and stimuli.

² Conventions of standard written English include sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.



Sample Essay

Claim: Procrastination is Not an Effective Tool for Getting Things Done

From a survey of 24,000 “95 percent of people confess to at least occasional procrastination.” This means that at some point in your life, you have probably procrastinated. The articles “This Was Supposed to be My Column for New Year’s Day” by John Tierney and “The Procrastination Doom Loop and How to Break it” both explain that procrastination is not an effective tool because the research cannot prove its effectiveness and because it causes negative emotion.

The first reason is that procrastinating is self-defeating. In “The Procrastination Doom Loop- and How to break it” by Derek Thompson he states that, “the latter is, by definition, self-defeating.” That statement proves that procrastination makes things harder than it needs to be. The author then goes on to assert, “Putting off an important task makes us feel anxious, guilty, and even ashamed.” That shows that procrastination does more harm to you than the task at hand does. So, instead of putting yourself through all of that dread, just get it done before you worry yourself crazy.

Another reason procrastination is not an effective tool for getting things done is how it causes negative emotion. Eric Jaffe explains in Thompson’s passage that, “Putting off an important task makes us feel anxious, guilty, and even ashamed...” he continues by asserting, “Anxiety, guilt, and shame makes us less likely to have the emotional and cognitive energy to be productive.” In saying this, Jaffe is explaining that you feel at fault when you don’t accomplish a task because of procrastination. You feel almost like giving up. Likewise, Thompson explains, “Procrastination and forgetfulness are bad, independently. Together they’re double-headed meteor hammer smashing your productivity to tiny bits,” asserting that when you use forgetfulness as procrastination you combine these actions creating more of negative response.

In contradiction, some people might say that procrastinators are often productive. In “This was supposed to Be My Column for New Year’s Day,” John Tierney collected information from Dr. Perry which claimed, “Procrastinators seldom do absolutely nothing.” However, later in the passage, Tierney says “How many people are actually being productive about it? Alas, there’s no good data...” This shows that this is true. Previously in the article, the author talks about “positive procrastination.” Later on, the author says, “...for now many self-control researchers have doubts about positive procrastination.”

Procrastination is not an effective tool for getting things done because research has no proof of it being effective nor does it have a positive effect on emotions. Therefore procrastination is a self defeating habit that could over take your life.

Guiding Questions for Essay Analysis

Development

1. How many quotes from the text are used in each paragraph? _____
2. Do the explanations connect back to the claim (position) and support it? _____
3. Do the texts and explanations of text make sense together? _____
4. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this essay's development based on the answers you gave to these questions? _____

Focus and Organization

1. Does the paper have an introduction with an attention getter, background, and good thesis? If not, what is it lacking? _____
2. What is the claim/argument/position? _____
3. Does the introduction state the titles or authors of the articles? _____
4. List the topic of each body paragraph. _____

5. Is the counterclaim presented and refuted effectively? Does the counterclaim flow logically with the rest of the paragraph, or does it seem out of place? _____
6. Is the paper organized logically? If not, what doesn't make sense? _____
7. Does the paper have an effective conclusion that stresses the argument and gives a call to action? If not, what should be added? _____
8. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score the paper's focus and organization based on your answers to these questions? _____

Language

1. Does the paper use precise and effective vocabulary? _____
2. Does the paper have varied sentences? (not elementary or repetitive) _____
3. Does the paper use sophisticated transitional phrases? Give examples. _____
4. Does the paper use formal language? _____
5. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this section? _____

Conventions

1. Do the grammatical errors interfere with the meaning of the essay? _____
2. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this section? _____

Overall

1. Write one **praise** indicating best part of this essay. _____

2. Write one **polish** indicating what should be revised to improve the essay. _____

Your Essay

Claim: Procrastination is an Effective Tool for Getting Things Done

"You can stop feeling guilty for procrastinating. Science has come up with a defense of your condition." Based on the passages, it is evident that procrastinating is an effective tool for getting things done. Procrastinators are often productive and can use strategies to help complete task.

One reason is procrastinators are often productive, according to Dr. Perry, he quotes that, "Procrastinators...seldom do nothing." Many people might assume that procrastinators do nothing, but really, they keep themselves busy. Perry also states, "The procrastinator becomes a useful citizen." Even though someone who procrastinates isn't accomplishing what they need to, they're still getting work done.

Another reason procrastination is an effective tool is because strategies can help make procrastinators complete task. Initially the author asserts that, "for the most of us, procrastination can be beaten." The author also mentions, "95 percent of people confess to at least occasional procrastination." This proves that procrastination is common.

While some believe procrastinating is good others say that this approach isn't merely self-defeating. Also this "creates a procrastination doom loop...makes us less productive." Yet if you have a paper, and precise task structure, it won't be self-defeating. Along with that many assert that procrastination and forgetfulness are bad. "They're a double-headed meter...smashing your productivity..." This is not true though, because you're still productive while holding off other assignments.

In conclusion procrastination is an effective tool for getting things done, because procrastinators are often productive, and strategies can help make procrastinators complete tasks. Some people believe procrastination is not an effective tool, because research can't prove its effectiveness, and cause negative reactions and emotions. This is incorrect because procrastination can be helpful for people who have a lot of other things to do, and it could improve their moods instead of negatively affecting them. So if you know that you procrastinate, don't let other people tell you that it's bad, because it's not.

Guiding Questions for Essay Analysis

Development

1. How many quotes from the text are used in each paragraph? _____
2. Do the explanations connect back to the claim (position) and support it? _____
3. Do the texts and explanations of text make sense together? _____
4. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this essay's development based on the answers you gave to these questions? _____

Focus and Organization

1. Does the paper have an introduction with an attention getter, background, and good thesis? If not, what is it lacking? _____
2. What is the claim/argument/position? _____
3. Does the introduction state the titles or authors of the articles? _____
4. List the topic of each body paragraph. _____

5. Is the counterclaim presented and refuted effectively? Does the counterclaim flow logically with the rest of the paragraph, or does it seem out of place? _____
6. Is the paper organized logically? If not, what doesn't make sense? _____
7. Does the paper have an effective conclusion that stresses the argument and gives a call to action? If not, what should be added? _____
8. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score the paper's focus and organization based on your answers to these questions? _____

Language

1. Does the paper use precise and effective vocabulary? _____
2. Does the paper have varied sentences? (not elementary or repetitive) _____
3. Does the paper use sophisticated transitional phrases? Give examples. _____
4. Does the paper use formal language? _____
5. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this section? _____

Conventions

1. Do the grammatical errors interfere with the meaning of the essay? _____
2. If 4=Adv, 3=Prof, 2=Basic, 1=BB, what would you score this section? _____

Overall

1. Write one **praise** indicating best part of this essay. _____

2. Write one **polish** indicating what should be revised to improve the essay. _____
