Open Your Class With This Tomorrow- *Study Like a Champ*

Research suggests procrastination is a measurable personality trait associated with poor learning outcomes. Have students take and self-score the following test (*I Can Take This Self-Report Tomorrow!*) on procrastination habits as an introduction to the need for planning for distributed study.

Part I: Self-report on procrastination habits.

I Can Take This Self-Report Tomorrow!

Directions: For each statement, decide whether it is uncharacteristic or characteristic of you using the following scale. In the box to the right of each statement, fill in the number on the scale that best describes you.

	Extremely **Un**characteristic (0)	Moderately **Un**characteristic (1)	Moderately Characteristic (2)	Extremely Characteristic (3)	Your Score
1	I often submit applications, permission slips, and required forms on the day are due or the day before.				
2	I feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities, commitments, and obligations.				
3	I struggle with effective time management.				
4	I have difficulty waking up and leaving for school at the time I plan, resulting in me arriving late.				
5	I sometimes take a day off school to finish a project or assignment that is due.				
6	When I receive an email or text that requires a response, I do not respond right away.				
7	Even when I have assignments or tasks that require very little effort, I find that I put off task completion.				
8	I typically put off making life decisions (e.g., choosing a post high-school career path, finding a job, clubs, or sports to join).				
9	I generally delay starting large assignments or projects because I don't know where to begin.				
10	I usually have to rush to complete large tasks like essays, projects, or presentations by the deadline.				
11	In the past, I have asked my parents to call me out of a class for one period because I was not prepared for an assessment.				
12	I tell myself I will wake up early to finish work before school, even though this strategy has not worked for me in the past.				
13	I struggle to arrive on time for appointments.				
14	I feel that I often work best under pressure.				
15	I create excuses or justifications for not completing tasks on time.				
16	I often seem to end up shopping for birthday or holiday gifts at the last minute.				

17	I am more likely to put off boring or difficult tasks.	
18	I am more comfortable putting off a task or assignment when I know that my classmates are doing the same.	
19	I do not complete class assignments on time if I know that a teacher will accept late work.	
20	I delay completing a task unless I know that it will be done perfectly.	

Scoring:
Add all of your numbers and place your final procrastination score here: _____.
Higher scores indicate greater levels of procrastination tendency.

Note: This assessment has been modified from the original 1986 version to reflect current student procrastination examples.
Original Source Listed in Study Like a Champ
"At Last, My Research Article on Procrastination," by C.Lay 1986. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 20(4), pp. 474-495.

Part II - Discussion
For students with procrastination tendencies – planning for studying is even more essential. Procrastination often leads to cramming, which is an ineffective study method. Cramming results in rapid forgetting, meaning that when preparing for cumulative exams students will have retained very little from earlier parts of the course. Cramming can lead to reduced sleep which research consistently shows is essential for optimal performance on assessments and effective memory retention (see Chapter 4 – Spacing it Out). The book highlights for students the benefits of distributed study and encourages them to plan to space out their learning. They can use a planning app or a paper planner.

Part III – Create a Study Plan that Uses Distributed/Spaced Practice
Background:
High school and college students are often reminded about the importance of time management, but it may be a skill that they do not know how to improve. In *Study Like a Champ*, the authors explain this directly. The bottom line is that you have a finite amount of time in a week and time management involves planning to ensure you complete everything you need to do and still have time for rest, fun, and all of your tasks. The authors point out that many of us are unaware of how time goes so fast or, more importantly, how much time we waste. Before planning, students might want to track exactly how they spend their time for a week. They may find they spend hours mindlessly scrolling social media or binge-watching shows such that they deprive themselves of critically needed sleep.

Directions: Students will create a study plan that also includes other responsibilities and free time to ensure success in the next unit. Students can use a paper calendar, a Google Doc, or an app for planning purposes. There are a variety of apps, either calendar or checklist-based, which are effective for creating study plans including the two suggested below.

Fantastical (http://flexibits.com/fantastical)
Todoist (http://todoist.com/home)

1. Make certain you have a clear sense of what is required for each class for the week (e.g., number of pages to read, assignments due, exams)
2. Enter each assignment, quiz, and test on your calendar.
3. Consider color-coding by class or by type of assignment.
4. Block of time for work, attending clubs or sports, or other planned events.
5. For each class block off time when you will work on assignments and when you will study/review material. This will help you utilize the benefits of distributed (spaced) practice.
6. Finally, include other key activities (e.g., eating, sleeping, physical activity, fun). This may help you to prevent binge-watching a show on impulse or wasting a large amount of time on social media.
7. Include for each day when you plan to wake up and when you plan to sleep. Sleep is critical for physical and mental health and for effective memory retention. Having adequate sleep is one of the best things you can do to ensure productivity.

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