

# TAKING ACTION

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- No Follow-Through
- The 15-Letter Pitfall
- How Do I Rate?
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will define “procrastination.”

Students will recognize that taking action is a necessary step toward achieving a goal.

Students will identify personal obstacles to taking action, and then plan to act on an immediate goal.

### Materials Needed

- Drawing paper, pencils, and colored pencils or markers for each student (Part I)
- A dictionary (Part II)
- One copy of the “A Self-Survey” activity sheet for each student (Part III)

**Starter (3 minutes)**

Begin class with a word problem: “If three birds are sitting on a tree branch and two decide to fly away, how many birds are left sitting on the branch?”

Give students time to respond. Then, explain that there are three birds left. Two have decided to do something, but until they actually fly away, nothing has happened. They are still sitting on the branch.

Say, “In today’s class, we’re going to see why setting goals and making plans are only half the job, and how procrastination can affect you.”

**Part I No Follow-Through (15 minutes)**

Purpose: Students express their understanding of the concept of procrastination and recognize that taking action is a necessary step in achieving a goal.

**1. Students prepare for the activity.**

Explain that students are going to create comic strips. First, they will work together for about five minutes to generate ideas. Then, they will work individually or with a partner to create their strips.

Decide whether you will have students work together as a class or in smaller groups for the first part of this activity.

**2. Students brainstorm ideas for their comics.**

Challenge students to think of examples of procrastination that could be illustrated as a comic strip. Tell them that the title of their comics will be “No Follow-Through.”

To prompt ideas, suggest that students think of some consequences of not following through on a plan of action. You might start the brainstorming yourself by giving examples such as the following:

- A comic about the three birds sitting in a tree could be illustrated in two frames. The first frame might show three birds sitting on a branch. One bird says, “I’ve got to get going now.” Another bird says, “Me too.” A clock on the tree reads 1:00. The next frame might show the same three birds in exactly the same place, but the clock now reads 3:00.
- You might draw a one-frame comic with a picture of a face covered by hair. The person says, “I planned to get my hair cut a few weeks ago.”
- You might draw a one-frame comic that shows a couch potato in front of a TV saying, “I really want to get an A on the project that’s due tomorrow.”

**3. Students draw their comic strips.**

Circulate among students as they work, and encourage students who seem to be having difficulty to work in groups. A student who likes to draw or who draws well, for example, could team up with someone who is better at generating ideas or writing captions.

As students finish, invite them to display their comics around the classroom.

## Part II The 15-Letter Pitfall (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students develop a definition of “procrastination.”

### 1. Students define “procrastination.”

Write the verb “procrastinate” on the board. Prompt students as a group to discuss and formulate a definition of the word. Have volunteers write ideas on the board, and then summarize the ideas as a definition.

At the same time, have a volunteer look up the word in the dictionary and read the definition aloud to the class. (Merriam-Webster defines “procrastinate” as “to put off intentionally the doing of something that should be done.”) Challenge students to consider the dictionary definition in light of their own definition and to make adjustments as they see fit.

### 2. Students focus on the meaning of “procrastination.”

Challenge students to think of synonyms for procrastinate. Encourage them to spin off ideas in order to generate a long list of words. Your list might include “delay,” “postpone,” “put off,” “defer,” “stall,” “hold off,” “shelve,” “suspend,” “hang back,” “wait,” or “avoid.”

Help students make observations about the list by asking what all of these words seem to have in common. (They all refer to avoiding action.)

Draw attention to the board as you point out that procrastinate is a verb. Then, ask:

- What is a verb? (Students should say that a verb is an action word.)
- What verb is illustrated by all of your comics? (Students should say that they illustrate the verb “procrastinate.”)
- How do these comics illustrate the meaning of this verb? Choose one to talk about.
- Do you think that procrastinating helps us achieve our goals? Explain your answer.

Erase the letter “e” at the end of procrastinate and add the suffix “-ion.” Ask students to pronounce the word and define it. (Students should say that it means “the act of procrastinating.”) Say, “Procrastination is a 15-letter pitfall. It keeps people from achieving their goals.”

### 3. Students reflect on taking action.

Direct students' attention to the list of synonyms on the board. Challenge students to create a list of antonyms for "procrastinate." Your list might include "act," "do," "go," "move," "work," "play," "function," "operate," "produce," "use," "follow through," "pursue," "carry out," or "achieve."

Point out that the act of setting goals is only the beginning—one has to do something about them. Say, "You can make the best action plan in the world. You can set the most realistic goals with the most realistic deadlines and look success right in the face. But if you do nothing—if you don't follow through—you won't accomplish anything."

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### Part III How Do I Rate? (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students identify personal obstacles to taking action, and then plan to act on an immediate goal.

#### 1. Students assess their ability to follow through on their goals.

Tell students that they are going to fill out a questionnaire that will help them see how well they follow through on their goals. As you distribute copies of the "A Self-Survey" activity sheet, assure students that their answers will be confidential and that you will not be asking anyone to share information from this activity sheet with the class.

Remind students to keep these activity sheets in their folders. Suggest that when they are feeling discouraged about their goals, they should take another look at this survey.

#### 2. Students reassess their goals and plan to act.

Ask students to take out their copies of the "Valid Goals" activity sheet, which they completed in Lesson 1 of this module. Have them review the list of things they wanted to accomplish that week.

Ask for a show of hands from students who accomplished all three goals listed on their activity sheets. Suggest that students take the time to either pat themselves on the back for a job well done or select one goal to work on now. Tell them to write down something they will do by the end of the day to accomplish this goal.

If time permits, encourage students to talk about difficulties they have with setting goals or following through on plans. Guide the discussion so that students will focus on advising and consulting with other students rather than looking to you for answers.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to define "procrastination." Ask them to explain how procrastination can affect their goals. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Setting appropriate goals is not enough. You must follow through by taking action.
- Procrastination is a 15-letter pitfall—it can keep you from achieving your goals.

## Student Assessment

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1. Give an example of a time when you procrastinated. What were the consequences?
2. What are some things you do to procrastinate?
3. Why is it important to take action?

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“Discipline is remembering what you want.”

Have students offer examples of how remembering their goals might prompt them to avoid procrastination.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have students work in small groups to create acrostics of the word “procrastination.” Each group should write a strategy for avoiding procrastination for each letter of the word (e.g., “P” is for “put your goals first”).

Have each group share its acrostic with the class.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students choose one question from the “A Self-Survey” activity sheet that they answered yes to and describe one incident in which their lack of follow-through was a problem. Have them devise a plan for handling the situation differently next time.

Invite volunteers to share their writing in order to get feedback/support from the class.

### Math Connection

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Have students track for one week how much time they spend procrastinating. Have them create charts or graphs listing their tasks and showing their level of procrastination.

As a class, discuss how the amount of time one spends procrastinating is directly related to the amount of stress one feels when forced to finish a task with a quickly approaching deadline.

## Homework

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Have students write a one-page article about an accomplishment they or someone else made in school or in their community. Students may want to include quotes, photos, or drawings about the accomplishment.

Have students share their articles as oral reports or include them in a class newspaper.

## Additional Resources

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Have students read “The Circuit,” a short story by Francisco Jimenez. The narrator of the story, a sixth-grade migrant worker, finds that his dreams for the future are compromised by the cycle of the harvest.

Have the class discuss the narrator’s goals and the obstacles he faces in reaching them.

# A SELF-SURVEY

| When you say "I will," but then you don't, is it because... | No    |           | Yes     |        |
|---|-------|-----------|---------|--------|
|   | Never | Sometimes | Usually | Always |
| 1. you're afraid that you won't be good enough?             |       |           |         |        |
| 2. a family member will put you down?                       |       |           |         |        |
| 3. you just wanted to please someone else?                  |       |           |         |        |
| 4. friends will think you've become weird?                  |       |           |         |        |
| 5. you've said "I will" to too many things already?         |       |           |         |        |
| 6. you have trouble saying no to some people?               |       |           |         |        |
| 7. you're not sure you can?                                 |       |           |         |        |
| 8. you wanted to, but nobody else did?                      |       |           |         |        |
| 9. you didn't want to do it in the first place?             |       |           |         |        |
| 10. you just blew it off?                                   |       |           |         |        |

If you answered yes to five or more questions, chances are you're too hard on yourself! Ease up and stop worrying so much about what others think. Your opinion counts, too! Have a little more confidence in yourself.

If you answered no to more than five questions, keep going for it! You might want to check that your competitive side doesn't get the best of you.