

NEWS LESSON

The Email You Keep Not Writing

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which task becomes harder the longer you put it off?
2. Would you rather start something badly or wait for the right mood?
3. What makes a small task feel surprisingly big?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**procrastination**	☐	A	a feeling that you must do something quickly or well
2	**delaying**	☐	B	doing something later than you should
3	**perfectionism**	☐	C	wanting everything to be exactly right, with no mistakes
4	**pressure**	☐	D	put things in the right place so a room looks neat
5	**rush**	☐	E	do something very fast because you have little time
6	**tidy**	☐	F	facts that show that something is true
7	**proof**	☐	G	something you already know or have seen before
8	**familiar**	☐	H	waiting too long to do something you should do now

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

You make coffee, tidy the desk and check the weather. An hour later, the task is still waiting.

1 It's Monday morning. You have an important email to write, and you know it will take only twenty minutes. First, you make coffee. Then you look at your phone. You tidy your desk and check the weather. Suddenly, an hour has gone by and the email is still there. You promise to start after lunch. If this sounds familiar, you are not alone. Most people put off difficult or boring tasks sometimes.

2 This behaviour is called procrastination. It means delaying something even when you know the delay may cause problems. Researchers have been trying to work out why we do it. One common explanation is that people are simply lazy, but recent studies suggest a more complicated picture. Feelings such as worry, fear and pressure can make starting a task surprisingly difficult.

3 In 2026, several studies looked at procrastination among university students. Researchers found links between delaying work and problems such as fear of failure, perfectionism and difficulty paying attention. Students who wanted everything to be perfect sometimes found it harder to begin. Others became distracted by social media. These studies showed connections, not proof that one problem always causes another.

4 Think about someone who needs to prepare a presentation. They might be afraid of making a mistake, so they tell themselves they must wait until they have a brilliant idea. Meanwhile, the deadline gets closer. The longer they wait, the bigger the task feels. In the end, they rush to finish and feel disappointed with the result. It becomes a difficult circle to break.

5 Experts often suggest starting small. Instead of telling yourself to finish the whole presentation, try writing the title or opening sentence. Put your phone away for fifteen minutes and see what happens. Breaking a large job into little steps can make it feel less frightening. It also helps to stop waiting until you feel completely ready. Motivation sometimes comes after you start, not before.

6 Of course, everyone has days when they are tired, busy or simply not interested. A little delay is normal. The problem begins when putting things off makes life more stressful and stops you doing things that matter. Perhaps the real question is not, 'Why am I so lazy?' but, 'What is making this task hard to begin?' Once you understand that feeling, the first small step becomes easier to take.

Sources: Nature Humanities and Social Sciences Communications. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Experts suggest beginning with a very small part of the task. T F NG
2. The 2026 studies showed connections rather than proof of a cause. T F NG
3. Procrastination is more common among younger people than older people. T F NG
4. Recent studies suggest that procrastination is simply laziness. T F NG
5. The writer says it is better to wait until you feel ready before you begin. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

complicated	deadline	disappointed	distracted	frightening	motivation	proof

1. The _____ for the project is Friday, so there is no more time.
2. The rules of the game were so _____ that nobody understood them.
3. I was _____ by the noise outside, so I lost my place in the book.
4. She felt _____ when she saw her exam result because she had hoped for a better one.
5. Without _____ , it's hard to get out of bed and go for a run.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Last night she _____ a long message to her teacher. (WRITE)
2. In 2026, several studies _____ at procrastination among university students. (LOOK)
3. Students who want everything to be perfect find it harder _____ . (BEGIN)
4. Last week, my brother _____ a very long time to answer my message. (TAKE)
5. It also helps to stop _____ until you feel completely ready. (WAIT)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A phrasal verb is a verb plus a small word. The small word changes the meaning, so learn them together, such as give up.

carry	come	find	give	go	put	stand

1. _____ your phone away in a drawer before you start.
2. An hour can _____ by very quickly when you are watching videos.
3. I need to _____ out what time the bus leaves.
4. She didn't want to _____ up the idea completely.
5. A good idea can _____ up when you are walking.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would help someone begin a task they were avoiding?
2. Can a deadline be useful without becoming stressful?
3. Which would you change first: the task, the place or your expectations?

9 Role-play: the report nobody wants to start

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the colleague who wants to start now

You and your colleague must finish a report by Friday. You want to start today, even with a small part. Explain why starting early helps and suggest a first step.

Student B · the colleague who wants to wait

You'd rather wait until you feel ready. Explain why. Listen to your colleague's plan and decide if you can agree on a small first step.

Useful phrases

I think we should start today.
I'd rather wait until I feel ready.
Let's just write the first heading.
That's a fair point, but I'm not in the mood.
How about fifteen minutes with our phones away?
OK, you've convinced me.

Afterwards, tell the class what you agreed and whether it was a good plan.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 B · 3 C · 4 A · 5 E · 6 D · 7 F · 8 G

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 deadline · 2 complicated · 3 distracted · 4 disappointed · 5 motivation

6 Verb forms

1 wrote · 2 looked · 3 to begin · 4 took · 5 waiting

7 Language focus

1 Put · 2 go · 3 find · 4 give · 5 come

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