## Procrastination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language level:</th>
<th>Intermediate to Advanced (B1 – C1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner type:</td>
<td>Teens; Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity:</td>
<td>Reading; Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language:</td>
<td>The verb ‘get’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials:</td>
<td>Video; Worksheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A lesson plan by Jamie Keddie
Preparation, materials and equipment

1. For this activity, you will need an animated comic titled *Procrastination*. It comes from the series, *Tales of Mere Existence* by Lev Yilmaz. To access the video on YouTube, click on the following link:

   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P785j15Tzk

2. For each student, make a copy of **Worksheet 1: Procrastination** (page 6) and **Worksheet 2: ‘Get’ sentences** (page 7).

3. You will need a few pairs of scissors to let students cut up the first worksheet. Alternatively, prepare by cutting it up yourself.

   Decide how you are going to display the clip in class. Possibilities include:
   
   - Laptop or desktop (good for small groups)
   - Computer, projector + screen
   - iPhone or other mobile device (good for one-to-ones/intimate classes)

   Don’t forget the loudspeakers

   If you don’t have Internet access in class, you could download or ‘capture’ the video from YouTube. Use [www.savevid.com](http://www.savevid.com) or a similar site. Note, however, that in doing so, you will be breaching YouTube’s Terms of Use.

Lesson plan

1. Casually tell your students that they have “a lot of stuff to get done” today. They may look at you blankly. Perhaps they don’t know the word *stuff*. Write the phrase on the board.

   *Today, we have a lot of stuff to get done.*

   Point out that the word *stuff* is functionally similar to the word *thing*. One major difference is that *stuff* is uncountable.
2. Tell students that they are going to see an animated comic by filmmaker Lev Yilmaz called *Procrastination*. Ask students if they know what this word means. If anyone knows, that’s great. If not, don’t worry and don’t tell them at this stage.

3. Play the video with the sound turned down and make use of the pause function to elicit/teach the following vocabulary, which can be written on the board.

- A desk
- To spill coffee
- To clean up with a sponge
- Cereal
- The grocery store
- To do your shopping
- To make an omelette
- To do the dishes
- To squeak

Note that you can also clarify the name of the animated comic series - *Tales of Mere Existence*. Tell students that *mere* is an adjective that is used to emphasise that something is small or unimportant.

4. Ask students if they can guess what the story is about now that they have seen the pictures.

5. Put students into pairs. To each pair, give a copy of *Worksheet 1: Procrastination*. Ask students to cut up the 8 pieces of text and put them into the correct order according to the story.

While they put the texts into the correct order, answer any questions about unknown words or expressions. See glossary box on the next page.

6. Let pairs share their answers with each other. Then let them check their results by playing the video in full with the sound up.

7. Ask students if they can identify Lev’s accent. If your students are more used to British English, ask them if they can identify any words or expressions that are associated with US spoken English (see glossary box on the next page).
Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To figure *</td>
<td>To come to the conclusion that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was out of cereal</td>
<td>The cereal was finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bunch of *</td>
<td>A lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crap</td>
<td>Another word for stuff (be careful, this word literally means shit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t feel like cereal</td>
<td>I didn’t want cereal; I wasn’t in the mood for cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hardware store *</td>
<td>A shop to buy tools and stuff like that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of</td>
<td>A bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be distracted</td>
<td>To lose your concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twilight Zone</td>
<td>A popular US television series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-rested</td>
<td>Not tired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These words/expressions may be especially common in US spoken English.

8. Check students’ comprehension of any remaining words or phrases in the text that have not been mentioned. Do this by asking them to “find a verb that means come to the conclusion that”; “find another word for stuff”; “find an expression that means I wasn’t in the mood for cereal”, etc.

9. Ask students if they would like to see the video again. If so, play it second time.

10. Ask students if they can now tell you (or elaborate on any previous definition of) what procrastination means. Find out if your students procrastinate and if so, in what situations.

Procrastination is the act of delaying, deferring or putting off actions, tasks or pieces of work to a later time. It is associated with things we don’t really want to do. There are three criteria for a behaviour to be classified as procrastination: it must be counterproductive, unnecessary and delaying.

11. Give out a copy of the second worksheet to each student and drill pronunciation of the eight ‘get’ sentences.
12. Ask students to translate the eight ‘get’ sentences into their own language. They should write their translations on the first set of spaces on the worksheet marked MT (= Mother Tongue). See diagram below.

This type of activity may work best when it is done collaboratively. For this reason, ask students with the same linguistic background to work together to write consensus translations.

13. (For monolingual classes): Allow different pairs or groups of students to compare their translations and refine them if necessary. If you have knowledge of their language, you can get involved.

14. Ask students to fold the worksheet along the dotted line. This will allow them to see their own Mother Tongue translations but not the original sentences in English. Ask them to translate their own MT sentences back into English and write them on the second set of spaces marked Eng.

15. Let students unfold the worksheet and compare what they have written with the original sentences in English.

16. Let students pair up and test each other. Student 1 says sentences in student 2’s mother tongue and student 2 must recall them in English. After a while, roles are reversed.

---

**Diagram:**

- **i.** Student translates sentences into his own language and writes them on these spaces (MT = Mother Tongue).
- **ii.** Student folds sheet here so that he can see his MT translations but not the original sentences in English.
- **iii.** Student translates MT sentences back into English and writes them on these spaces (Eng. = English).
- **iv.** Student unfolds sheet and compares his Eng. translations with the originals.
When I got home I didn’t feel like cereal anymore and so I made an omelet and I did the dishes so I wouldn’t have to do them after I got my stuff done.

When I got to the grocery store I remembered a bunch of other crap I needed to get and I figured I was already there so I did my shopping for the week so I didn’t have to worry about it while I got my stuff done.

When I was finished I realized I hadn’t eaten anything and I didn’t want to be hungry while I got my stuff done so I went into the kitchen and I was out of cereal.

I just have to make sure I get to bed early because I want to be well-rested tomorrow so I can get my stuff done.

I sat down at my desk to start getting my stuff done and I spilled my coffee so I got a sponge to clean it up and I figured I’d take an extra minute to clean the whole desk because a clean desk would help me get my stuff done.

When I got back it was getting kind of late and I knew I wouldn’t be able to get my stuff done today so I started watching the Twilight Zone marathon on TV.

And then I went out to get some oil from the hardware store because my desk chair is kind of squeaky and I didn’t want to be distracted by a squeaky chair while I got my stuff done.

This morning I got up and got ready quickly because I had to get a lot of stuff done.
‘Get’ sentences (worksheet 2)

a. This morning I got up and got ready quickly.
b. I spilled my coffee so I got a sponge to clean it up.
c. When I got to the grocery store I remembered some other stuff I needed to get.
d. When I got home I didn’t feel like cereal any more.
e. I went out to get some oil from the hardware store.
f. When I got back it was getting late.
g. I just have to make sure I get to bed early.
h. I want to be well-rested tomorrow so I can get my stuff done.

a. _______________________________________________________
b. _______________________________________________________
c. _______________________________________________________
d. _______________________________________________________
e. _______________________________________________________
f. _______________________________________________________
g. _______________________________________________________
h. _______________________________________________________

a. _______________________________________________________
b. _______________________________________________________
c. _______________________________________________________
d. _______________________________________________________
e. _______________________________________________________
f. _______________________________________________________
g. _______________________________________________________
h. _______________________________________________________

a. _______________________________________________________
b. _______________________________________________________
c. _______________________________________________________
d. _______________________________________________________
e. _______________________________________________________
f. _______________________________________________________
g. _______________________________________________________
h. _______________________________________________________