**<http://www.raulpacheco.org/2015/04/my-acwri-strategies-fill-up-paragraphs-one-idea-per-paragraph/>**

[**Seven ways to procrastinate productively as an academic**](http://www.raulpacheco.org/2014/09/seven-ways-to-procrastinate-productively-as-an-academic/)

As I’ve noted elsewhere on my blog, I am very much far from perfect. Despite my ability to speed-read, touch-type about 100 wpm and have quasi-eidetic memory, I can (and often do) procrastinate. Having a very rigorous routine ([as established on my weekly schedule](http://www.raulpacheco.org/2013/08/scheduling-my-academic-life-to-the-very-minute-my-weekly-template/)) reduces distractions quite a lot. But when I do get distracted, and particularly during working hours ([which in my case start at 4:00am to write for 2 hours every day](http://www.raulpacheco.org/2014/07/on-writing-every-day-for-two-hours-acwri/)) I try to waste time in a way that is beneficial to my academic writing and research. Here are seven ways in which I procrastinate in the most productive way I can.

**1) Organizing my journal article/book/book chapter databases (and personal libraries):**  
Because I’m old fashioned, I organize the printed versions of all journal articles and book chapters/conference papers I read in magazine holders. Each journal article has a plastic, adhesive Post-It plastic tab where I write the author(s) last name and the year. This allows me to find a specific article very easily (as the real life doesn’t have search capabilities as Mendeley does!). I also label each magazine holder with the details of the paper I’m writing or the general topic.

**2) Reading and highlighting a journal article or a book chapter**:  
Despite my love for technology, I’m still an old-fashioned scholar and I print out journal articles and book manuscripts (right after I’ve downloaded them into my Dropbox and uploaded them on to my Mendeley database/reference manager). I also prefer to read books in print rather than online. So when I feel like I’m bored out of my mind and my mind wanders and I want to procrastinate, I grab a journal article or book chapter and I start reading and highlighting with shiny colored pens. I do this particularly because from the highlighting I can then type or write by hand my own notes about the journal article.

**3) Typing or writing my notes by hand.**   
When I find that I’m bored and want to procrastinate, I find a specific journal article or book chapter I want to summarize and I take notes from the highlighted portions. I also type directly into a Word document but have found that writing by hand really enables me to clarify my own thinking. Usually after a few of these, I can then use the notes for my own writing.

**4) Clean up reference manager entries.**   
Because I like to have my libraries accessible anywhere with an internet connection (and offline), I use Mendeley and Dropbox to store journal articles, books and book chapters, as well as my own writings and datasets. I upload all my readings in PDF format to Mendeley (I’ll have to discuss the whole Zotero vs Mendeley vs EndNote thing in another post), so when I am bored, I often clean up my Mendeley database (there’s always a PDF whose metadata Mendeley is unable to grab properly) to ensure that all entries have proper bibliographic data.

**5) Doing Google Scholar citation searches on a topic I’m interested in.**  
When I feel like I’m stuck, I often simply do a Google Scholar for a different topic to the one I’m writing and begin downloading recent articles. Often this leads to free-form handwriting, and I frequently use those notes to build a new paper or to polish a manuscript. Of course, after downloading, I still need to print it out, read it, highlight it and upload it on to my Mendeley database and clean the reference with all the proper bibliographic metadata. Which is in and of itself, a whole other level of procrastination.

**6) Spend a brief amount of time on Academic Twitter (or other social media, like Facebook or blogs).**  
This is my favorite mode of procrastination. Because I get so much value from Academic Twitter ([as noted in my post on the five ways in which Twitter can help you in an academic context](http://www.raulpacheco.org/2014/05/five-ways-in-which-twitter-can-be-useful-in-academic-contexts/)), I feel that even my procrastination there (usually conversational although I engage in a fair amount of retweeting) is productive.

**7) Going for a walk, talking to a colleague or exercising at the gym**  
When everything else fails, I usually go for a walk. The best procrastinating method I’ve found has been walking while listening to classical music. Often times I find myself re-energized and inspired to come back again and prepare lecture slides, write or read more.

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