

Student Counselling Office (Zentrale Studienberatung)

The 5-minute rule

What's the idea?

If you have a task to do – particularly a large, tiring or difficult one – and are feeling unmotivated, it can be very hard to get going. Starting small can help you get into the task and feel better able to tackle the challenge.

How does it work?

Choose a small and specific part of your task and do it – but only for five minutes. Then stop, and decide whether you want to carry on or not. If you really don't feel like carrying on, then you can leave the task and do something else instead. You can always come back to it later on.

Sounds easy? It is – and seeing as you've made a start, you'll probably want to carry on.

How does using this method help you?

It feels much easier for you to make a start with a task, because you'll only have to work on it for five minutes.

You feel less resistant to doing the task and don't have to make excuses to yourself.

There are always five minutes somewhere in your day to do a little bit of your task.

You don't need to feel guilty for stopping after five minutes.