

MANAGING ACADEMIC PERFECTIONISM

High standards can motivate learning and achievement, but perfectionism can create stress and fear of mistakes. The goal is not to lower your standards, it is to develop habits that support growth and success.

Five Strategies to Break the Perfectionism Cycle

1. Focus on Learning, Not Flawlessness

Ask yourself: “What is this assignment helping me learn?”

Successful students are not those who never make mistakes; they are those who use mistakes and feedback to improve.

2. Set Time Limits

Perfectionism can cause you to spend more time than necessary on assignments. Before you begin, set a realistic amount of time to complete the work and decide when you will stop revising. Done on time is often better than perfect and late.

3. Redefine Mistakes

Mistakes are part of the learning process, not evidence that you are incapable. Instead of asking: “Why did I get this wrong?” Ask: “What can I learn from this and do differently next time?”

4. Avoid Comparing Yourself to Others

You see other students’ outcomes, not their process. Everyone experiences uncertainty, challenges, and setbacks. Measure your progress against your own growth, not someone else’s achievements.

5. Know When “Good Enough” Is Enough

Before continuing to revise, ask:

- Have I met the assignment requirements?
- Will more time significantly improve my understanding or the quality of my work?
- Am I improving the assignment, or trying to reduce my anxiety?

If you are spending more time trying to make something perfect than learning from the process, it may be time to submit and move forward.

