

THE PROCRASTINATION AUTOPSY

1. CASE IDENTIFICATION

Case #0900: The Phantom Research Emergency

The patient possesses nearly everything required to produce the presentation—except the slides themselves.

2. SURFACE CAUSE

“I need to do more research before I can start making the slides.”

Translation: “**I don't feel sufficiently certain yet to commit my ideas to slides.**”

3. HIDDEN CAUSE

Primary diagnosis: Perfectionism disguised as preparation.

The research isn't actually the main obstacle. The real obstacle is the moment when research ends and **irreversible decisions begin**:

- Which information stays?
- What goes on each slide?
- What if the presentation isn't good enough?
- What if something important was missed?

Research feels productive while protecting you from the uncomfortable act of creating.

4. EVIDENCE

Clue #1: You already have the topic.

→ The presentation isn't suffering from a lack of direction.

Clue #2: You already have research materials.

→ More research is unlikely to solve the immediate problem.

Clue #3: You already have an outline.

→ The structural ambiguity has largely been eliminated.

Clue #4: Zero slides have been created.

→ The bottleneck occurs specifically at the **creation stage**, not the information-gathering stage.

The crime scene is surprisingly clean.

5. PROCRASTINATION PATHOGEN

Perfectionism-Induced Research Addiction

Symptoms include:

“I’ll just look up one more thing.”

followed by 47 browser tabs, three hours of reading, and absolutely no PowerPoint slides.

6. REMOVE THE TUMOR

The biggest resistance isn't **making 20 slides**.

It's the implied demand:

“Make 20 GOOD slides.”

Remove that requirement.

Your first objective is NOT:

Create a polished 20-slide presentation.

Your first objective is:

Create 20 ugly slides containing the correct information.

No beautiful design.

No perfect wording.

No additional research unless you discover a genuine information gap.

Design comes later.

The first version is allowed to look like it was assembled by a sleep-deprived raccoon.

7. 🚨 EMERGENCY PROCEDURE — NEXT 10 MINUTES

Set a **10-minute timer**.

Open your presentation software.

Create **20 blank slides**.

Then use your existing outline to give each slide a brutally simple title.

For example:

1. Introduction
2. The Problem
3. Background
4. Key Finding #1
5. Key Finding #2
6. Key Finding #3
7. Evidence

8. Example
9. Example
10. Comparison
11. Important Data
12. Analysis
13. Implication
14. Challenge
15. Solution
16. Recommendation
17. Expected Result
18. Key Takeaways
19. Conclusion
20. Q&A

Do not research. Do not design. Do not edit sentences.

Your only mission:

Turn “zero slides” into “20 ugly slides.”

Once slide #1 exists, the psychological crime scene changes completely.

8. RECOVERY PLAN

Phase 1 — Skeleton: 10–20 minutes

Create all 20 slides and put titles on them.

Phase 2 — Information dump: 30–45 minutes

For each slide, copy only the most relevant information from your existing research.

Think **3–5 bullets or one key visual**, not paragraphs.

Phase 3 — Evidence check: 15 minutes

Ask:

- Does every major claim have support?
- Is anything obviously missing?
- Are there any factual holes?

Only now is additional research permitted.

Phase 4 — Story check: 15 minutes

Read only the slide titles.

Can someone understand the story from the titles alone?

If not, rearrange them.

Phase 5 — Visual cleanup: 30–45 minutes

Apply a simple template, fix spacing, shorten ugly text, add essential charts/images.

Do **not** attempt graphic-design perfection.

Phase 6 — Rehearsal: 15–20 minutes

Give the presentation once out loud.

Mark only serious problems.

Don't rewrite the entire presentation because you suddenly dislike slide 7.

Phase 7 — Final inspection

Check:

- spelling
- slide order
- numbers
- references
- presentation time
- opening and closing

Then stop.

9. FINAL DIAGNOSIS

CAUSE OF PROCRASTINATION: Perfectionism-Induced Research Addiction — using additional research to avoid the uncertainty of actually creating the presentation.

FIRST TREATMENT: Create 20 ugly slide titles immediately. No research allowed for the first 10 minutes.

PATIENT STATUS: Recoverable

The good news: this isn't a 20-slide presentation problem anymore.

It's a **zero-slide problem**.

And zero can become one in about 30 seconds. Once you have one, you can make two. Then five. Then twenty.

The patient does not need more information. The patient needs evidence that the presentation has begun.