

# DO-IT

# NEWS

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## DO-IT Celebrates Thirty Years!

By Sheryl Burgstahler, DO-IT Director

Have we really been “doing it” for 30 years? Well, time flies when you’re having fun, and that makes sense when it comes to DO-IT. In our flagship program, DO-IT Scholars, 570 students with disabilities from over 250 high schools in Washington have learned to use technology to maximize their independence and productivity, networked with successful people who have disabilities, and engaged in activities that help them prepare for challenging college studies and careers.

It’s exhilarating to witness our students reach personal milestones, continue to participate in DO-IT as mentors to incoming students,



*DO-IT has helped thousands of students access college and prepare for competitive careers.*

### Highlights of this issue:

|  |    |
|--|----|
| DO-IT Director Promotes Accessible Educ. at the UN’s General Assembly .....                    | 2  |
| <i>AccessComputing</i> at the Tapia Celebration in Washington, DC .....                        | 2  |
| <i>AccessERC</i> , <i>AccessINCLUDES</i> , and <i>NNL</i> Highlighted in Report from NSF ..... | 3  |
| New DO-IT Videos and Webinars .....  | 4  |
| Zoom Announces New Features in Support of Sign Language .....                                  | 4  |
| Highlights from the 2022 <i>DO-IT Scholars</i> Program .....                                   | 5  |
| Access to Informal STEM Learning Celebrates Milestone .....                                    | 10 |
| DO-IT Partners in the NCCSD .....  | 11 |
| The 3-Minute Rule and Procrastination .  | 11 |

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speak in classes and at conferences, and become leaders in their fields. The successful practices of the DO-IT Scholars program have been replicated to benefit thousands of youth with disabilities through other projects and collaborative efforts, including those in Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore.

DO-IT works with everyone who can contribute to the success of people with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers: Disability service providers, employers, educators, parents, governmental agencies, and high-tech companies. Through our many programs, presentations, capacity building institutes, online classes, and conferences, DO-IT and its partners help people work more effectively with individuals with disabilities. We share successful practices around the world through a variety of resources, communities, and collaborations.

Scott Bellman, DO-IT Center manager since 2010, shares “It’s amazing to look back on the thousands of people who’ve engaged

with us on this accessibility journey through workshops, conferences, summer programs, video development, and the creation of other resources. Each time I look back, though, my mind returns to the present. There are many great challenges ahead as we continue to fight for equitable access within education, careers, and communities.”

We will continue our successful partnerships and create new ones to address critical needs in our society. We invite you to share your talents and resources to extend our reach.

[This article includes excerpts from our publication called DO-IT Retrospective: Our First 30 Years, where you can learn more about the past, present, and future of DO-IT.]

### **DO-IT Director Promotes Accessible Education at the United Nations General Assembly**

By Scott Bellman, DO-IT Program Manager

On September 29, Sheryl Burgstahler delivered a presentation to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, which was held online and in New York. At the event, titled “Using Assistive Technology to Promote Social Inclusion for People with Disability through Collaboration and Partnership between Africa, America, Asia and Europe,” Sheryl presented information focused on education challenges across the globe. She was joined by a representative from each continent. Learn more about the event at [bit.ly/UNgeneralassemblypresentation](https://bit.ly/UNgeneralassemblypresentation).

Representatives from each continent shared their perspective. Representing North America, Sheryl presented challenges related to the full participation in education for individuals with disabilities, as well as recommendations and possible solutions assistive technology (AT) might offer to facilitate inclusive education for individuals with any kind of disability.

A conference organizer reached out to Sheryl last month, sharing “given all you have done with the DO-IT Center and UW-IT Access Technology Center, I think you will be the perfect person to speak on this topic to highlight the importance of AT as a hugely transformative and enabling influence for people with disabilities and diverse background.”

Congratulations to Sheryl on this amazing endeavor!

### **AccessComputing at the Tapia Celebration in Washington, DC**

By Brianna Blaser, DO-IT Staff

The first in-person Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing Celebration since 2019 was held September 7 – 9 in Washington, DC. Although there are still ongoing barriers to travel and meeting, *AccessComputing* was excited for the opportunity to gather with many in our community.

The first full-day of Tapia was kicked off with a keynote by *AccessComputing* co-PI Stacy Branham titled Hello, World! I Have a Disability. ([vimeo.com/showcase/9871892](https://vimeo.com/showcase/9871892)). There were at least six other disability or accessibility-related sessions and for the first time, *AccessComputing* held a reception for our community members.



*AccessComputing Co-PI Stacy Branham talks with other participants at Tapia 2022. Photo courtesy of Tapia.*

*AccessComputing* co-PI Elaine Short (Tufts) served as scholarship chair and *AccessComputing* co-PI Raja Kushalnagar served as deputy accessibility chair.

*AccessComputing* partners Patricia Ordonez (University of Maryland, Baltimore County), Stephanie Ludi (University of North Texas,) and Sam Rebelsky (Grinnell College) and team members Vincent Martin and Heriberto Acosta-Maestre were also part of the organizing committee.

The Tapia Celebration provides a great opportunity to connect with mentors, network across computing educators and employers, and learn about diversity in computing. We look forward to seeing our community at the 2023 Tapia Celebration in Dallas, TX next September.

### ***AccessERC*, *AccessINCLUDES*, and *NNL* Highlighted in Report from National Science Foundation**

By Scott Bellman

Recently, the National Science Foundation's (NSF's) Engineering Research Center (ERC) Program released a report that highlighted three DO-IT Programs: *AccessERC*, *AccessINCLUDES*, and *Neuroscience for Neurodiverse Learners (NNL)*.

As stated at the NSF ERC Association website, "The ERC program brings technology-based industry and universities together in an effort to strengthen the competitive position of American industry in the global marketplace. These partnerships established cross-disciplinary centers focused on advancing fundamental engineering knowledge and engineered systems technology while exposing students to the integrative aspects of engineered systems and industrial practice... [The program] has produced a new generation of engineering graduates who are highly innovative, diverse, globally engaged, and effective as technology leaders in industry."



DO-IT has helped ensure that this new generation of engineering graduates includes students with disabilities. Through partnerships with the UW's ERC, the Center for Neurotechnology (CNT), founded in 2011, DO-IT has received additional funding for the three projects mentioned above to carry the missions of the ERC Program and the CNT forward.

In the Fiscal Year 2020 ERCs Program report, released in September 2022, *NNL* is highlighted in the section called "Culture of Diversity and Inclusion." The report shares, for example, that "*NNL* is providing hands-on experiences in neuroscience disciplines, networking opportunities, and resources to high school and early post-secondary students identified as neurodiverse learners and will disseminate findings to teachers of courses related to neuroscience and, more broadly, to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics." Also stated in the report's "Key Events" section, an article called "Center Promotes National Capacity Building" shares the work of *AccessERC* and *AccessINCLUDES*, which are designed to build a collaborative infrastructure for broadening participation in NSF-funded research and practice.



*Photo of the new sign language feature courtesy of Zoom Video Communications, Inc.*

## Zoom Announces New Features in Support of Sign Language

By Terrill Thompson, DO-IT Staff

In October 2022, Zoom announced a new dedicated channel for sign language interpreters. The new feature allows one or more participants in a Zoom meeting to be assigned a role of “Interpreter” by the host, and assigned a specific language, such as “American Sign Language.”

Once interpreters are assigned, all meeting participants are notified that sign language interpretation is available, and an “Interpretation” button is added to the control bar at the bottom of the Zoom screen. If participants click this button, they’re presented with a choice of available languages. After selecting their preferred language, an interpreter window appears. It’s separate from the main Zoom window, so it can be resized and repositioned independently of the Zoom interface. If there are multiple interpreters for a given language, they share the same interpreter window but only one interpreter is shown at a time. They can hand-off to each other by toggling their video on and off.

This new feature offers an alternative to interpreters being regular participants, whose videos can be moved to the forefront by “pinning” (by individual users to customize their own view) or “spotlighting” (by the meeting host, for all users). This original model is delicate, as participants’ windows

within Zoom share space with all the other Zoom features, such as the speakers’ video windows and shared screen. The new feature eliminates all confines and allows the interpreter to be anywhere on the screen, at any size.

Documentation from Zoom about these features is available for different audiences. Meeting owners and hosts, see *support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/9644962487309*. Participants, see *support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/10178543580173*.

DO-IT staff has been testing this new feature and providing ongoing feedback to Zoom. There are a few known limitations. For example, as of November 2022, the interpreter window is not captured when the meeting is recorded. This limitation is expected to be addressed for cloud recordings in an upcoming release. A second problem is that the interpreter channel only works in the main room, not in breakout rooms. Interpreters can be assigned to breakout rooms, but in the breakout room they become regular participants again, so participants who need their services will need to fall back to the old way of doing things (e.g., pinning and spotlighting), until they return to the main room. A third problem is that interpreters by default do not have the ability to unmute themselves so they can speak on behalf of a participant. The host must change a setting for each interpreter to allow them to speak, which is burdensome for the host and adds an extra layer where things can go wrong.

If you have feedback you’d like to share with Zoom about their accessibility send it to [tft@uw.edu](mailto:tft@uw.edu), and we will relay your feedback to the Zoom accessibility team.

### **New DO-IT Videos and Webinars**

DO-IT has recently added new videos and webinars to our online collection of resources. Check out some of our new offerings at [uw.edu/doit/new-do-it-videos-and-webinars-online](http://uw.edu/doit/new-do-it-videos-and-webinars-online).

## Highlights from the 2022 *DO-IT Scholars Program*

By Tamitha Tidwell, DO-IT Staff

Each summer, the DO-IT Scholars program hosts a Summer Study that supports 40-60 high school and college students with disabilities in learning about technology, self-advocacy, college preparation, and disability culture. This past summer, first-year students shared their favorite sessions, as well as what they learned this year with peers and staff.

Below are some highlights:

### Favorite Sessions

- HTML coding and web design
- Using math with origami and 3D models
- Inclusive Tech Lab with Microsoft
- Learning about the brain with the Center for Neurotechnology
- Opportunities to connect and socialize, including game night, movie night, the talent show, and snack box socials
- How to advocate in college

### What Scholars Learned

- Different aspects of how the human brain works
- HTML coding, website styling, JavaScript, and web content creation
- Methods for reaching out to professors and disability services, as well as how to best approach getting needed accommodations
- Different forms of accessible technology, including screen readers (which often work better than Voice Over) and the tools being developed in the Inclusive Tech Lab
- The history of people with disabilities and our rights
- How to advocate for myself in college and other aspects of life
- Perspectives from college students and professors who have worked with students with disabilities before
- Science careers can be accessible and achievable

### Summer Study: What Do Phase I *Scholars* Do?

This year, DO-IT Phase I *Scholars* participated in a three-week Summer Study session. They learned about college life; explored online resources; interacted with peers, staff, and mentors; and had fun. The *DO-IT Scholars* program started in 1993 as an experimental project for teens with disabilities nationwide. While it is usually held on campus at the University of Washington, this year it was held online. It is currently open to Washington State teens and is supported by the State of Washington. The *DO-IT Scholars* program is supported by all DO-IT staff and led by Tami Tidwell and Andrea Mano.

**NOTE:** We had so many amazing articles this year from *Scholars*, we are sharing more in our next issue!

### Why I'm Interested in Web Design

By Francine, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

There are so many resources online, like different games I like to play or tools to help me study for tests. Whenever I have a test coming up, I find websites that explain the information and use online quizzes that help me get ready. I have made my own quizzes using the Kahoot website.

Web design interested me because it would be entertaining and fulfilling to make websites that help people learn and have fun at the same time. We learned to code in Visual Studio, which was challenging but the instructors were helpful and patient. I learned how to change my background, add images and text, and other skills. If I keep studying, I can learn much more. I would love to create websites that have guessing games to help people learn about new things.

## How DO-IT Supports Me

By Oliver, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

DO-IT has done a great job supporting my Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). DO-IT staff provides opportunities to speak up and advocate for myself, and everyone listens and is understanding about different needs.

Staff answer questions quickly and provide a variety of resources. They respect my hobbies, interests, and thoughts. They also help me by providing the tools I'll need to be successful, such as opportunities to meet with others who have disabilities and learning about accessibility tools. I am glad I am a part of the DO-IT community.

## Ballet, Piano Lessons, and Swimming

By Maddie, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

### My Disabilities

I have right hemiparetic cerebral palsy, autism, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, dermatillomania, as well as some other disabilities. Each affects me quite differently, but they do all affect me. I also have a very determined mindset on anything I do, especially when it's something I've been told I can't do (even though I can). I've had many hobbies and interests, and I've had a variety of experiences, good and bad, when trying these hobbies with my disabilities.

### Ballet

When I was younger, I wanted to take ballet lessons. My mom signed me up and informed the teacher about my disabilities. You'd think that the teacher would be fine hearing about my disabilities, but that didn't happen. Instead, the teacher told my mom they didn't have enough slots open—which turned out to be a lie. A couple of hours later, I found out someone else in my neighborhood had just been called and gotten the slot from that same ballet teacher. My mom knew right away that I was discriminated against without even an option to try and see if I could dance.



2022 *Scholar Maddie shows off her piano skills.*

### Piano Lessons:

I've always loved music, so when my older brother started taking piano lessons, I wanted to learn how to play too. My mom and I weren't sure whether his teacher would teach me how to play because of my disability, so my mom found a teacher who agreed to give me a shot. I've now been playing piano for a decade, and I'm thankful I was given a chance to learn and grow in music.

### Swimming

My brothers and I began swimming lessons when we were in elementary school. I joined a club swim team in fifth grade. It was a pretty small team and anyone with swimming experience who wanted to join could. During this time, my weakness on my right side was more visible, and I was pretty weak overall. When we started to go to swim meets, I was extremely anxious, both for the competitive nature of the event and due to how many people would be there. Luckily, I had my parents, brothers, friends, and coaches who helped give me support, and I grew in my skills and confidence.

Two years later, my family moved, and we had to join a different team. This new club team had us try out and asked us to swim all four main strokes (butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle). I got a spot on the team, which was so great. However, since this team was a lot larger, I had a harder time connecting with the coaches and getting help specific to my disability. I had to learn to speak up for myself and began to communicate more with my coaches about how cerebral palsy

affects me. I also joined my school team, and in my junior year, I decided to quit the club team and just focus on my school team---this has been the right decision for me because it has allowed me to focus more on school and not overwork myself in swimming. I've learned more about how my cerebral palsy affects my disability and how to speak up for myself.

### **DO-IT's Evening Activities**

By Ethan, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

The evening activities were my favorite moments from DO-IT. One of my favorite events was our game night. We played Jackbox games; Jackbox is a fantastic game series and is great for parties and other hangouts. Jackbox is one of my favorite games to play with both my online friends and my offline friends, so playing it with the other people in DO-IT was really fun. Another of my favorite activities was movie night. Watching movies together is so much fun and allows me to share things I like with other people. I really enjoyed watching *How To Train Your Dragon* and getting to discuss it with my fellow *Scholars*.

### **My Days of Summer Vacation**

By Kimo, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

During the first days of summer, my brother and I went to a gas station store near my neighborhood. While I was outside waiting for my brother, I saw one of my IEP (individualized education program) organizers from school in his truck. He told me to "have a great summer," and I tried to do just that.

I thought multiple times about writing a journal about my summer like how I did in 2020 and 2021, but I was so busy, I never got around to it. On June 18th, my family and I went camping to a campsite at Columbus Park that was new to us. We had a lot of fun.

Throughout the summer, we also went to do tons of smaller fun events. We went to see a movie at AMC called *Lightyear*, and later we went and saw the movie *Bad Guys* outside of the library. We went to various parks and other interesting places to enjoy the good weather. I also signed up for the Summer Reading Program.

In July, I spent my time with DO-IT at Summer Study. I learned a lot in my time there, and I spent time the rest of the summer having fun and preparing for school.



*Ashley shows off the snacks she had during the Snack Box Social.*

### **Snack Box Social: Tasty and Terrific**

By Ashley, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

DO-IT provided a yummy assortment of snacks and had the snack boxes shipped right to our houses each week. There were so many choices, including chips, soups, iced tea, crackers, and cookies. It was hard to choose from so many options!

During the social we ate our snacks and talked about our hobbies. Alexis shared some artwork she was working on, I shared about my power soccer team, and Tami did a show-and-tell with her stuffed unicorn, which brought out others' stuffed animals as well!. More people shared about their life and interests, and everyone had a terrific time sharing and getting to know each other. A big thank you to DO-IT!

## **A Disabled Guy Who Can Do Anything: A Short Story About Achievement and Ability**

By Oscar, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

Ferguson is a person who has all kinds of disabilities. He lives on an island where there are few opportunities for him to get better in his education. Though his family has access to all the technology he needs—hearing aids, a wheelchair, text-to-speech, and others—Ferguson must still overcome the battles of dealing with school, where many of the other students make fun of him. What hurts him the most is when other students say he “can’t do anything” because it seems obvious to them that he cannot do some specific task for a group project. This happens all the time and really gets to Ferguson.

He hardly joins clubs, because when he tries, he gets rejected or told he can’t participate. No one takes the time to get to know him or find out what he is interested in. He imagines himself being a leader of a club where they accept everyone. This dream is what he desires the most, a club focused on accepting and supporting people with disabilities. “Why couldn’t I make my own club?” he asks himself.

The very next day, he told his parents about his exciting ideas about making his own club at his school. His mom told him that making clubs in school takes a lot of responsibility. His dad agrees. They both know that Ferguson can do it, but he does not have anybody to help him at school. As far as he knows, he is the only student with a disability. However, he decides to ask his favorite teacher, a history teacher, who agrees to help him make his own club.

Ferguson realizes that the first step to running a club is spreading the information about his club to the school public. He asks his teacher if he can put an advertisement on his bulletin board; the teacher agrees. By the next week, multiple people are interested in participating in Ferguson’s club. The day when the club is

supposed to open, Ferguson is really shocked when he finds the hallway to his classroom crowded with students. He has no idea what is happening, and it takes a minute for him to realize it is for his club. He is speechless and opens the door. Everybody is excited for the activity and learning experiences about disability in his club.

A few weeks before the last day of school, there is an assembly about awarding the best students in school. It is so crowded that people can hardly hear each other. Ferguson saw many trophies for the awarded students. He really wants one but doesn’t want to expect anything. A few minutes later, something unexpected happens to Ferguson; he is awarded for the best club activity. He is emotional and proud of himself that he can do anything if he believes in himself.



*DO-IT students get together to hang out, play games, and discuss issues.*

## **My Perspective on the DO-IT Experience** By Cosey Mo, 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*

As a 2022 *DO-IT Scholar*, I can bring my outlook to their program and what it provides for others. Located at the University of Washington, the *Scholars* program is designed for those with various disabilities. As a first-year scholar of the program, the staff invest a lot of time with each person. They provide students with the assistive technology they need, showing each student the tools they need to succeed. As there is a wide variety of disabilities, we also come out of this program

learning new things about each other and how others face similar or different challenges. We spent time developing a website, working collaboratively, and learning different skills that will help in college as well as understand how to help each other as each person needs help differently.

As we worked together, one remarkable thing this program provides is the opportunity to connect with others that have disabilities. I believe that even if you have a disability, you may not fully understand someone else's experience, but you can still relate to overcoming societal barriers. Learning about others' disabilities and how they affect each person gave me insight into helping you be outstanding advocates for yourself and others.

As someone with a multiple disabilities, I don't have complete control over fixing myself. I believe that we should not feel like we need to be fixed. Challenges and struggles may affect us negatively, but I find it's better to think about the parts we can control, like strategies to manage our disabilities, medication, or changes in habits. Controlling the controllable can reshape how each of us feel about ourselves. Disability can be a strength and advantage---it gives us perspectives and experiences that most don't have, and while the effects of our disabilities influence us, we are not just the disability. People with disabilities want to fit in, but we also want to be open in our identities. We are fantastic and extraordinary just the way we are.

One of the fun things about the *Scholars* program is visiting the University of Washington and getting a roommate. Unfortunately, this year the program is unable to do this. COVID-19 has brought us online. The DO-IT program provides complimentary snacks, and we partook in online chat groups. There were also movie nights and sessions on writing. One activity we did was watch a documentary called *Fixed: The Science/Fiction*

*of Human Enhancement*. The documentary is about changing the capacity at which we can make enhancements to the human body. It brings up the challenges of defining the limitations of so-called normalcy and discusses the moralistic views of fixing disability.

"Curing" disability is a hard topic, and a choice each person should be allowed to make for themselves. The more advancements in "fixing" disabilities, the more people with disabilities may be treated differently. As enhancements are created, we also need to make sure they are accessible to everyone. The goal should not be to fix the disability but to reduce the struggles and stress that come with a disability. People with disabilities aren't different. They are ordinary people who are working in a society that often condemns those that exist outside of the box. Society has a way of projecting harsh pressures and expectations on people, even though there are a lot of different ways we can all live.

Being in this program has been an honor, and I greatly appreciate all the tools we have been given. This program is one I highly recommend for those that want to get support for their disability, especially if they are planning on going to college. When applying to DO-IT, highlight yourself. Answer each question deliberately with intention. Being a part of DO-IT is a lot of fun, and I look forward to the coming years. I hope we will be back in person next year. I look forward to getting to know all of you. And remember, we are not an inspiration. We are who we make ourselves. Your disability is not you; it is your choice to view it as an advantage. Many of you are great at piano, writing, or drawing. Each of us has things to be proud of, and this is what defines us. Don't forget who you are, because every one of us has a future we deserve.

To find out more information or apply to the *Scholars* program, visit [uw.edu/doit/programs/do-it-scholars/overview](http://uw.edu/doit/programs/do-it-scholars/overview).

## Access to Informal STEM Learning Celebrates Milestone

By Scott Bellman, DO-IT Program Manager

DO-IT's NSF-funded *Access to Informal STEM Learning (AccessISL)* project recently completed its third year. Please join us in celebrating this milestone. We're excited to share resources and information about our work to help ensure that informal STEM learning is accessible to everyone!

Recently, the Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE) featured *AccessISL's* work on their blog in an article called Building Capacity in and Access to Informal STEM Learning Settings for Participants with Disabilities. We are honored to be featured among CAISE's offerings and we invite you to check it out.

*AccessISL's* website offers a variety of resources. As you explore the site, you can learn about accessible exhibits, universal design, promoting accessibility in curriculum and training, and more. Some examples include:

Proceedings from the *AccessISL Capacity Building Institute* share challenges and solutions regarding equitable access to ISL. Participants identified specific ways stakeholders can work together to increase universal design, accessibility, and systemic change as it relates to informal STEM learning.

*AccessISL* replication materials describe how the project provides internship opportunities for postsecondary students to enhance their learning about accessible ISL, promote accessibility within academic departments, and engage in activities to make ISL offerings more welcome and inclusive for everyone. The website also shares replication materials and best practices about Offering Accessible Online Informal Learning.



*Every year students with disabilities benefit from accessible informal learning opportunities*

The resource Pedagogical and Content Design Practices that Support Accessibility and Inclusion in Museology Courses is designed for faculty in Museology and Museum Studies programs who seek to create accessible and inclusive learning environments and integrate accessibility topics within their curriculum.

The *AccessISL* Knowledge Base offers over 200 case studies, promising practices, and Q&As regarding access to informal STEM learning. Examples of articles include:

- Accessibility Reviews: A Promising Practice to Improve the Accessibility of Local Science Education Programs
- How can I test my website for accessibility?
- Intrepid Museum: A Promising Practice in Providing Accessibility Information
- How can universal design be applied in educational settings?

You can get involved! All stakeholders are invited to participate in the *AccessISL* Community of Practice to join discussions and learn about opportunities to promote the increased participation of people with disabilities in informal science education offerings, training programs, and careers.

Find all of these resources at [uw.edu/doit/programs/accessisl](http://uw.edu/doit/programs/accessisl).

## DO-IT Partners in the NCCSD

By Sheryl Burgstahler, DO-IT Director

The DO-IT Center is partnering with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration ([ici.umn.edu](http://ici.umn.edu)) (ICI-UMN), the Association for Higher Education and Disabilities (AHEAD), and other organizations in the implementation of the National Center for College Students with Disabilities (NCCSD), which is funded by the US Department of Education. This new Center continues and expands practices employed in the current Center by the same name, which has worked for five years as the only federally-funded national center in the U.S. for college and graduate students with any type of disability, chronic health condition, or mental or emotional illness.

Located at [www.nccsdonline.org](http://www.nccsdonline.org), at the Center you can access the NCCSD Clearinghouse that has information like Finding a College, Paying for College, Handling Problems at School and much more. There are lots of resources for students, families, high school and college faculty and staff, researchers and policymakers. A current project that the NCCSD has undertaken is the development of training for postsecondary faculty to help them effectively teach students who have disabilities in their on-site and online courses.



## The 3-Minute Rule and Procrastination

By Eric W. Trekell, DO-IT Staff

Everyone's heard of the five-second rule, right? The urban myth that if a dropped piece of food is picked up within five seconds it's still safe to eat? Scientific research in microbiology has proven that myth to be false, because bacterium present on the floor can transfer to the food almost instantly.

The three-minute rule, on the other hand, is not an urban myth, but a strategy for overcoming procrastination; this strategy has been supported by research.

We all can be guilty of procrastinating—putting off something we know we need to do—but procrastination can be a significant problem for some. Putting off a task can bring a short-term sense of relief, but the longer we put something off, the more we experience a buildup of anxiety and stress. And so psychologists have come up with a “trick”, the three-minute rule, that can help most of us to overcome our procrastination tendencies.

The basic concept of the three-minute rule is to tell yourself that you'll work for three minutes, but only three minutes, on a task that you've been putting off. Regardless of why you're procrastinating, tell yourself that you'll work on it for three minutes. After that, if you still can't deal with the task just stop.

Psychology researchers have discovered that most people, with most tasks, will keep working after the three minutes are up, because telling yourself that you'll start off with only three minutes of work can help make the task seem more manageable. In one trial, researchers discovered that setting a “20-minute rule” (as used in the Pomodoro technique) seemed too daunting, but that of their study participants who tried the three-minute rule, 98% kept working past the initial

three minutes. These three minutes can get you out of the avoidance mindset, while longer time frames merely enhance avoidance.

Interestingly enough, psychology researchers were inspired to study the three-minute rule with procrastination because of the concept's success in fitness and exercise; fitness experts have long been having similar success by encouraging people to start exercising for very short periods daily, instead of jumping in with long exercise sessions. And, psychologists have found that the three-minute technique can help people overcome a variety of phobias and social anxiety, too.

Oh, and about the five-second rule with food? There are a lot of variables—how dirty the floor is can be more important than how long the food sits on the floor. If you're at home and swept recently, maybe the food is fine. If you're in public and can't wash the food, it might be better to just toss it.



*Many different people struggle with procrastination and getting work organized. Photo courtesy of the Disabled And Here Project.*

## About DO-IT

DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology) serves to increase the successful participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers, such as those in science, engineering, mathematics, and technology. Primary funding for DO-IT is provided by the National Science Foundation, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Department of Education.

For further information, to be placed on the DO-IT mailing list, request this newsletter or other materials in an alternate format, or make comments or suggestions about DO-IT publications or web pages, contact us at



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### DO-IT News Updates

For monthly news updates and past newsletters, visit [uw.edu/doit/news](http://uw.edu/doit/news)