

— FOURTH EDITION —



TEN STEPS  
*to*  
IMPROVING  
COLLEGE  
READING SKILLS



John Langan

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ATLANTIC CAPE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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# Preface: To the Instructor

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We all know that many students entering college today do not have the reading skills needed to do effective work in their courses. A related problem, apparent even in class discussions, is that students often lack the skills required to think in a clear and logical way.

The purpose of *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills, Fourth Edition*, is to develop effective reading and clear thinking. To do so, **Part I** presents a sequence of ten reading skills that are widely recognized as essential for basic and advanced comprehension. The first six skills concern the more literal levels of comprehension:

- Understanding vocabulary in context
- Recognizing main ideas
- Identifying supporting details
- Recognizing implied main ideas and the central point
- Understanding relationships that involve addition and time
- Understanding relationships that involve examples, comparison and/or contrast, and cause and effect

The remaining skills cover the more advanced, critical levels of comprehension:

- Distinguishing between facts and opinions
- Making inferences
- Identifying an author's purpose and tone
- Evaluating arguments

In every chapter in Part I, the key aspects of a skill are explained and illustrated clearly and simply. Explanations are accompanied by a series of practices, and each chapter ends with four review tests. The last review test consists of a reading selection so that students can apply the skill just learned to real-world reading materials, including newspaper and magazine articles and textbook selections. Together, the ten chapters provide students with the skills needed for both basic and more advanced reading comprehension.

Following each chapter in Part I are **at least six mastery tests for the skill in question**. The tests progress in difficulty, giving students the additional practice and challenge they may need for the solid learning of each skill. While designed for quick grading, the tests also require students to think carefully before answering each question.

**Part II** is made up of ten additional readings that will improve both reading and thinking skills. Each reading is followed by *Basic Skill Questions* and *Advanced Skill Questions* so that students can practice all ten skills presented in Part I. In addition, an *Outlining, Mapping, or Summarizing* activity after each reading helps students think carefully about the basic content and organization of a selection. *Discussion Questions* then afford instructors a final opportunity to engage students in a variety of reading and thinking skills and thus deepen their understanding of a selection.

**Part III** serves a variety of purposes. Fifteen combined-skills passages and tests review the skills taught in Part I and help students prepare for the standardized reading test that is often a requirement at the end of a semester. A section on propaganda techniques offers instruction and practice in a reading skill that some (but probably not all) instructors will have time to address. Next, there is a section on logical fallacies that can be covered depending on student needs and course requirements. Finally, there are writing assignments for all twenty readings in the text. When time permits, asking students to write about a selection will help reinforce the reading and thinking skills they have practiced in the book.

## Important Features of the Book

- **Focus on the basics.** The book is designed to explain in a clear, step-by-step way the essential elements of each skill. Many examples are provided to ensure that students understand each point. In general, the focus is on teaching the skills—not just on explaining or testing them.
- **Frequent practice and feedback.** Because abundant practice and careful feedback are essential to learning, this book includes numerous activities. Students can get immediate feedback on the practice exercises in Part I by turning to the limited answer key at the back of the book. The answers to the review and mastery tests in Part I, the reading questions in Part II, and the combined-skills tests in Part III are in the *Instructor's Manual*.

The limited answer key increases the active role that students take in their own learning. They are likely to use the answer key in an honest and positive way if they know they will be tested on the many activities and selections for which answers are not provided. (Answers not in the book can be easily copied from the *Instructor's Edition* or the *Instructor's Manual* and passed out at the teacher's discretion.)

- **High interest level.** Dull and unvaried readings and exercises work against learning. Students need to experience genuine interest and enjoyment in what they read. Teachers as well should be able to take pleasure in the selections, for their own good feeling can carry over favorably into class work. The readings in the book, then, have been chosen not only for the appropriateness of their reading level but also for their compelling content. They should engage teachers and students alike.
- **Ease of use.** The logical sequence in each chapter—from explanation to example to practice to review test to mastery test—helps make the skills easy to teach. The book's organization into distinct parts also makes for ease of use. Within a single class, for instance, teachers can work on a new skill in Part I, review other skills with one or more mastery tests, and provide variety by having students read one of the selections in Part II. The limited answer key at the back of the text also makes for versatility: the teacher can assign some chapters for self-teaching. Finally, the mastery tests—each on its own tear-out page— and the combined-skills tests make it a simple matter for teachers to test and evaluate student progress.
- **Integration of skills.** Students do more than learn the skills individually in Part I. They also learn to apply the skills together through the reading selections in Parts I and II as well as the combined-skills tests in Part III. They become effective readers and thinkers through repeated practice in applying a combination of skills.
- **Online exercises.** As they complete each of the ten chapters, students are invited to go online to the Townsend Press website to work on two additional practice exercises for each skill—exercises that reinforce the skill taught in the chapter.
- **Thinking activities.** Thinking activities—in the form of outlining, mapping, and summarizing—are a distinctive feature of the book. While educators agree that such organizational abilities are important, these skills are all too seldom taught. From a practical standpoint, it is almost impossible for a teacher to respond in detail to entire collections of class outlines or summaries. This book then, presents activities that truly involve students in outlining, mapping, and summarizing—in other words, that truly make students *think*—and yet enable a teacher to give immediate feedback. Again, it is through continued practice *and* feedback on challenging material that a student becomes a more effective reader and thinker.

- **Supplementary materials.** The three helpful supplements listed below are available at no charge to instructors who have adopted the text. Any or all can be obtained quickly by writing or calling Townsend Press (1038 Industrial Drive, West Berlin, New Jersey 08091; 1-800-772-6410), by sending a fax to 1-800-225-8894, or by e-mailing Customer Service at <[townsendcs@aol.com](mailto:townsendcs@aol.com)>.

- 1 An *Instructor's Edition*—chances are that you are holding it in your hand—is identical to the student book except that it also provides hints for teachers (see the front of the book), answers to all the practices and tests, and comments on selected items.
- 2 A combined *Instructor's Manual and Test Bank* includes suggestions for teaching the course, a model syllabus, and readability levels for the text and the reading selections. The test bank contains four additional mastery tests for each of the ten skills and four additional combined-skills tests—all on letter-sized sheets so they can be copied easily for use with students.
- 3 *Computer software* (in Windows and Macintosh formats) provides two additional mastery tests for each of the ten skill chapters in the book. The software contains a number of user- and instructor-friendly features: brief explanations of answers, a sound option, frequent mention of the user's first name, a running score, and a record-keeping score file.

- **One of a sequence of books.** This is the intermediate text in a series that includes three other books. The first book in the series, *Groundwork for College Reading*, is suited for ESL students and basic adult learners. The second book, *Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills*, is often the choice for a first college reading course. The *Improving* book is appropriate for the core developmental reading course offered at most colleges. *Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills* is a higher developmental text than the *Improving* book. It can be used as the core book for a more advanced class, as a sequel to the intermediate book, or as a second-semester alternative to it.


A companion set of vocabulary books, listed on the copyright page, has been designed to go with the *Ten Steps* books. Recommended to accompany this book is *Improving Vocabulary Skills* (300 words and word parts) or *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version* (200 words).

Together, the books and all their supplements form a sequence that should be ideal for any college reading program.

To summarize, *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills, Fourth Edition*, provides ten key reading skills to help developmental college students become independent readers and thinkers. Through an appealing collection of readings and a carefully designed series of activities and tests, students receive extensive guided practice in the skills. The result is an integrated approach to learning that will, by the end of the course, produce better readers and stronger thinkers.

## Changes in the Fourth Edition

Teacher suggestions and class use of the text have led to a number of major changes in the book:

- **Online exercises for each of the ten chapters in the book.** These are signaled at the end of each chapter with the following icon: . Students can go to the Townsend Press website ([www.townsendpress.com](http://www.townsendpress.com)) to do two additional practice exercises for each skill. Each exercise consists of ten items, and as students answer the items, they are provided with both a running score and explanations of each answer. The exercises, in other words, teach as well as offer practice, and they should serve as an excellent supplement to the activities and tests in each chapter of the book.
- **New teaching features within the chapters.** Three new features—Study Hints and Tips, “Check Your Understanding” exercises, and Chapter Reviews—make the book even easier to use. In addition, a new format for practice and test questions makes them even simpler to grade. If you were happy before with the notably clear format of the book, you’ll be even more pleased with the Fourth Edition.
- **A completely revised chapter on main ideas.** No skill is more important to good comprehension, so a great deal of time and class testing went into developing a fresh approach to teaching main ideas. The result is a chapter that, in an exceptionally clear, step-by-step way, shows students three specific ways to locate main ideas. This central skill will now be even more accessible to students.
- **New sections on reading tables and graphs and on figurative language.** The chapter on inferences has been expanded to include the reading of visual materials—tables and graphs. Students also learn to infer the meanings of similes and metaphors that are so often a part of literary writing.
- **New introductory chapters.** The Introduction has been expanded to include three separate chapters. One of the added chapters will help motivate students to read regularly—the most essential step to sustained reading growth; another chapter presents some quick study tips every student should know.
- **Greater visual appeal.** Additional photographs and cartoons in this edition create visual appeal and also help teach key skills. Boxes, rules, and screens set off patterns of organization, chapter reviews, and important points. The book is more visually friendly without becoming visually cluttered.
- **Many new models and practice materials and four new readings.** One reading is particularly noteworthy: “The Real Story of Flight 93” celebrates the heroic passengers who thwarted the terrorist plan to fly a hijacked plane into a second Washington, D.C. government building.



## Acknowledgments

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At Townsend Press, I thank Eliza Comodromos, Beth Johnson, Paul Langan, Carole Mohr, and Barbara Solot for the help they provided along the way. And I owe special thanks to editor extraordinaire Janet Goldstein. Because of her superb design and editing skills, the book enjoys an even more clear and “user-friendly” format than the previous edition. Her talents have also made possible the creation of the *Instructor’s Edition*, complete with answers and marginal comments, that accompanies the book. It is always a special pleasure to work with people who aspire toward excellence. With help from my colleagues in the teaching profession and at Townsend Press, I have been able to create a much better book than I could have managed on my own.

**John Langan**

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Reading Performance Chart *Inside back cover*

# **INTRODUCTION**

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# 1

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## How to Become a Better Reader and Thinker

The chances are that you are not as good a reader as you should be to do well in college. If so, it's not surprising. You live in a culture where people watch an average of *over seven hours of television every day!!!* All that passive viewing does not allow much time for reading. Reading is a skill that must be actively practiced. The simple fact is that people who do not read very often are not likely to be strong readers.

- How much TV do you guess you watch on an average day? \_\_\_\_\_

Another reason besides TV for not reading much is that you may have a lot of responsibilities. You may be going to school and working at the same time, and you may have a lot of family duties as well. Given a hectic schedule, you're not going to have much time to read. When you have free time, you're exhausted, and it's easier to turn on the TV than to open up a book.

- Do you do any regular reading (for example, a daily newspaper, weekly magazines, occasional novels)? \_\_\_\_\_
- When are you most likely to do your reading? \_\_\_\_\_

A third reason for not reading is that school may have caused you to associate reading with worksheets and drills and book reports and test scores. Experts agree that many schools have not done a good job of helping students discover the pleasures and rewards of reading. If reading was an unpleasant experience in school, you may have concluded that reading in general is not for you.

- Do you think that school made you dislike reading, rather than enjoy it?
-

Here are three final questions to ask yourself:

- Do you feel that perhaps you don't need a reading course, since you "already know how to read"? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you had a choice, would you be taking a reading course? (It's okay to be honest.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you think that a bit of speed reading may be all you need? \_\_\_\_\_

Chances are that you don't need to read *faster* as much as you need to read *smarter*. And it's a safe bet that if you don't read much, you can benefit enormously from the reading course in which you are using this book.

One goal of the book is to help you become a better reader. You will learn and practice ten key reading comprehension skills. As a result, you'll be better able to read and understand the many materials in your other college courses. The skills in this book have direct and practical value: they can help you perform better and more quickly—giving you an edge for success—in all of your college work.

The book is also concerned with helping you become a stronger thinker, a person able not just to understand what is read but to analyze and evaluate it as well. In fact, reading and thinking are closely related skills, and practice in thoughtful reading will also strengthen your ability to think clearly and logically. To find out just how the book will help you achieve these goals, read the next several pages and do the brief activities as well. The activities are easily completed and will give you a quick, helpful overview of the book.

## HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book is organized into four main parts:

### Introduction (pages 1–18)

In addition to this chapter, which will give you a good sense of the book, there are two other parts to the introduction. "Reading for Pleasure and Power" is a personal essay that describes my own experience in becoming a reader and suggests ways for you to develop the reading habit. Turn to page 13 and write, on the line below, the first of the suggestions:

---

"Learning Some Quick Study Tips" presents four hints that can make you a better student. If I had time to say just four things to incoming college students based on my thirty years of teaching experience, these are the things I would say. Turn to page 17 and write, in the space below, the first of these tips:

---

## Part I: Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills (pages 19–414)

To help you become a more effective reader and thinker, this book presents a series of ten key reading skills. They are listed in the table of contents on pages v and vi. Turn to those pages to fill in the skills missing below:

- 1 Vocabulary in Context
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Implied Main Ideas and the Central Point
- 5 Relationships I
- 6 Relationships II
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Inferences
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 Argument

Each chapter is developed in the same way.

**First of all**, clear explanations and examples help you *understand* each skill. Practices then give you the “hands-on” experience needed to *learn* the skill.

- How many practices are there for the second chapter, “Main Ideas” (pages 53–94)? \_\_\_\_\_

**Closing each chapter** are four review tests. The first review test provides a check of the information presented in the chapter.

- On which page is the first review test for “Main Ideas”? \_\_\_\_\_

The second and third review tests consist of activities that help you practice the skill learned in the chapter.

- On which pages are Review Tests 2 and 3 for “Main Ideas”? \_\_\_\_\_

The fourth review test consists of a story, essay, or textbook selection that both gets you reading and gives you practice in the skill learned in the chapter as well as skills learned in previous chapters.

- What is the title of the reading selection in the “Main Ideas” chapter?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Following each chapter** are six mastery tests which gradually increase in difficulty.

- On what pages are the mastery tests for the “Main Ideas” chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

The tests are on tear-out pages and so can be easily removed and handed in to your instructor. So that you can track your progress, there is a score box at the top of each test. Your score can also be entered into the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover of the book.



## Part II: Ten Reading Selections (pages 415–510)

The ten reading selections that make up Part II are followed by activities that give you practice in all of the skills studied in Part I. Each reading begins in the same way. Look, for example, at “The Yellow Ribbon,” which starts on page 417. What are the headings of the two sections that come before the reading itself?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Note that the vocabulary words in “Words to Watch” are followed by the numbers of the paragraphs in which the words appear. Look at the first page of “The Yellow Ribbon” and explain how each vocabulary word is marked in the reading itself.

- \_\_\_\_\_

### Activities Following Each Reading Selection

After each selection, there are four kinds of activities to improve the reading and thinking skills you learned in Part I of the book.

- 1 The first activity consists of **basic skill questions**—questions involving vocabulary in context, main ideas (including implied main ideas and the central point), supporting details, and relationships.
  - Look at the basic skill questions for “The Yellow Ribbon” on pages 419–420. Note that the questions are labeled so you know what skill you are practicing in each case. How many questions deal with understanding vocabulary in context? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 The second activity is made up of **advanced skill questions**—ones involving fact and opinion, inferences, purpose and tone, and argument.
  - Look at the advanced skill questions on pages 421–422. How many questions deal with making inferences? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 The third activity involves **outlining, mapping, or summarizing**. Each of these activities will sharpen your ability to get to the heart of a piece and to think logically and clearly about what you read.
  - What kind of activity is provided for “The Yellow Ribbon” on page 423?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What kind of activity is provided for the reading titled “Urban Legends” on page 432? \_\_\_\_\_

Note that a **map**, or diagram, is a highly visual way of organizing material. Like an outline, it shows at a glance the main parts of a selection.