

THIRD EDITION

Orientation to College Learning



Dianna L. Van Blerkom

Third Edition

ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE LEARNING

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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

One of the challenges faced by instructors in orientation, college success, and study skills courses is that of helping students succeed in college. This task includes such things as helping students develop independence, improve relationships, manage stress, and learn their way around campus, just to name a few. Although all of these are important first steps to success, once students learn to balance their time among home, school, and work responsibilities, they must begin to focus their attention on their course work. Many orientation texts do a good job of preparing students to meet the social challenges ahead of them; however, few of them prepare students to meet the academic challenges they must face to succeed in college. I wrote this text to fill that gap—to provide students with a solid foundation of learning skills and strategies that will help them succeed in college.

During the past seventeen years, I've had the opportunity to work with freshmen and sophomores at several colleges. I found that they were often as unaware of the level of work that would be expected of them in college as they were lacking in the skills and strategies that would help them succeed. By focusing on learning skills and strategies and incorporating some of the traditional orientation topics, I found a formula that led to success for many of them. The emphasis on learning skills and strategies helped them make a good transition to college. I have tried to share this formula with others in the field through writing *Orientation to College Learning*.

Why is it important to focus on learning skills and strategies? Many college students say that no one ever really taught them how to study. Although they probably did learn some study skills during their twelve years of schooling, they may not have learned the study and learning strategies that are necessary for college success. College courses are typically more difficult, more intensive, cover more material at a faster pace, and focus on topics that are completely unfamiliar to new college students. Some or all of these differences may contribute to the difficulties that some students have during their first year in college. As a result, some students are dissatisfied with their grades or their performance in their courses, but they don't know what to do to correct this problem. Often they experience anxiety and frustration and may even begin to doubt whether they have the ability to succeed in college. For many of these students, simply learning how to study and how to learn strategically in college makes the difference

between failure and success. Other students benefit by increasing their motivation, boosting their self-esteem, or learning better ways to study so that they can enjoy their college experience more. Becoming a strategic learner can help them achieve both their academic and their personal goals in college. If students apply what they are learning, they should see an improvement in their grades, have more time for other responsibilities or for leisure activities, feel less stressed about their academic work, feel better about themselves, and perhaps even begin to enjoy learning.

In order to succeed in college, students must learn to apply the strategies they are learning to real course material. Practicing these strategies on material in psychology, history, biology, and sociology, for example, will help students learn to modify and adapt the strategies to the lectures, texts, exams, and assignments for their other courses. This transfer experience will help motivate students to use these new strategies in their other courses, one of the goals of college success courses.

The activities at the end of each chapter can help your students facilitate this transfer. In addition, there are a number of text excerpts and practice activities available in the Activities Packet, available in the Instructor's Manual and online at the *Orientation to College Learning* web site (www.success.wadsworth.com/vanblierkom).

UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE TEXT

You might expect to find many of the important aspects of this book in any college success, orientation, or learning skills text. However, I feel that there are many features unique to this text:

- Emphasis on strategic learning throughout.
- Excellent student examples help students using the text to connect to effective study strategies illustrated by their peers.
- Clear, in-depth explanations for each of the strategies presented.
- A step-by-step approach to success in college.
- Excerpts from college textbooks in many disciplines help students practice new skills immediately (available in the Instructor's Manual and on the *Orientation to College Learning* web site).
- Exercises and activities for immediate practice of the concepts being taught.
- “Hands-on and experiential” approach, which supports best theories about how students really learn.

- Longer selections for practice, which simulate the real college experience better than short excerpts found in competing texts (available in the Instructor's Manual and on-line).
- InfoTrac College Edition® available, bundled with this text.
- Internet and InfoTrac College Edition activities in each chapter.
- Boxed feature, "Tip Blocks," in each chapter for traditional and nontraditional students.
- Flexible, straightforward format and organization that appeals to a variety of instructors—full-time or part-time faculty, counselors, residence life personnel, or anyone in academic assistance.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE BOOK

This text provides a step-by-step approach to college learning skills. By breaking each of the topics down into smaller units, students will be able to master each of the steps before moving on to the next. Each chapter includes instruction in the skill, student examples, exercises for practice, and activities for self-evaluation.

INSTRUCTION

This text provides clear, easy-to-read explanations of how to study. Strategies for getting motivated, setting goals, managing time, improving concentration, taking notes, reading and understanding textbooks, preparing for and taking tests, and communicating on paper, orally, and on the Internet are included. Because every student learns differently, a number of different strategies for taking text notes, preparing "To Do" lists, and preparing study sheets (just to name a few) are described in the text. Students are encouraged to try all of the strategies and then permitted to select the ones that work best for them. But learning to study effectively and efficiently requires more than just knowing a new skill; it also requires using that skill. In many cases, understanding why particular strategies work helps motivate students to use them in their other courses. Explanations and rationales for using these strategies are also presented so that students understand why one strategy may work in particular situations while others may not.

EXAMPLES

A large number of examples have been included in the text to show students how to use the strategies that are presented. For many students, seeing an example of what they have to do makes it much easier to do it right the first time. Since there are many ways to develop a study sheet, take notes, or even keep track of assignments, a number of different examples are shown for each of the different strategies discussed in the text. These models help students understand how to use the strategies and may also motivate them to complete their assignments.

PRACTICE

One of the most important goals of any successful college success, orientation, or learning skills course is getting students to transfer what they learn to other course work. In order to help students achieve this goal, more than 150 activities have been designed to let students practice what they have learned. In addition to the activities at the end of every chapter, the Activities Packet, available in the Instructor's Manual and on-line, contains additional activities and excerpts from other college textbooks. In this way, students are afforded practice with material that is similar to the course material they are currently using. Finally, many of the activities require students to practice the strategies using their own course materials. In this way, students transfer the skills they have learned to their other courses while at the same time increasing their understanding of the material for their other courses. In many cases, this leads to overall higher success, something that helps students see the real value of learning skills instruction.

SELF-EVALUATION

Many of the activities are designed to help students monitor their own learning. The "Where Are You Now?" activities provide a quick check of the number of effective strategies students have prior to beginning each unit and the number they have made a part of their repertoire at the end of the unit. The "Where Are You Now?" activities are available on-line for "post testing." Some instructors choose to have students complete the end-of-chapter activity at a later date to allow more time for the students to incorporate the strategies. In addition, activities throughout the book ask students to evaluate many of the strategies that are presented in the text. It is only through self-evaluation that students can actually prove to themselves that one method of study is working for them. Once students know that a strategy is effective, they are more likely to continue to use it.

CHANGES IN THE THIRD EDITION

The third edition of *Orientation to College Learning* contains new Tip Blocks, review questions, activities, and student examples in every chapter. Although additional changes were made in all chapters in this third edition, only the most significant changes are listed below.

NEW CHAPTER

Chapter 1, Getting Ready to Learn, is a new chapter designed to give students a strong foundation in active, strategic learning. The beginning of the chapter provides information to help students become active, strategic, self-regulated learners. A new section on getting motivated helps students understand how motivation impacts on performance and provides a number of strategies for increasing motivation. The information on learning styles, previously presented in Chapter 4, has been expanded and added to this chapter, where it fits more naturally. The learning style inventories have been modified and are available in print form in the text as well as in a self-scoring format on the *Orientation to College Learning* web site. Information on stress management has also been included to help students make the transition to college more effectively. Finally, the sections on decision making and problem solving have both been expanded for this third edition.

NEW TOPICS INCLUDE:

- active learning (Chapter 1)
- strategic learning (Chapter 1)
- self-regulated learning (Chapter 1)
- getting motivated (Chapter 1)
- managing stress (Chapter 1)
- goal setting and performance (Chapter 2)
- action planning (Chapter 2)
- active listening (Chapter 5)
- Cornell Notetaking (Chapter 5)
- critical reading (Chapter 6)
- preparing for math and science exams (Chapter 9)
- monitoring learning (Chapter 9)

EXPANDED COVERAGE ON:

- nontraditional students in every chapter
- goal setting and motivation
- the S-RUN-R reading/study system
- SQ3R reading/study system
- decision making and problem solving
- concentration and learning styles
- monitoring reading comprehension
- outline and block notes
- mapping and charting for text notes
- the Five-Day Study Plan
- active learning strategies
- developing study sheets
- study groups
- problem-solving strategies
- predicting essay questions

TEN ACTIVITIES IN EVERY CHAPTER:



- a web site activity (new)



- a journal activity (new)



- an activity specifically designed for nontraditional students



- a group activity



- an InfoTrac College Edition activity



- an Internet activity



- a “Where Are You Now?” activity

- two transfer activities

- a monitoring activity

DESIGN FEATURES:

- new larger trim size to expand margins
- new larger font for easier reading
- new blue shading to highlight headings, Tip Blocks, activities, and student examples
- new icons to mark Internet, InfoTrac College Edition, group, nontraditional, journal, and web site activities
- new Tip Blocks that integrate suggestions for traditional and nontraditional students in every chapter
- new cartoons
- new concept maps at the beginning of every chapter
- new review questions at the end of every chapter
- new *Orientation to College Learning* web site

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual includes an overview of each chapter, teaching suggestions, course materials and handouts, journal and portfolio activities, quiz questions, and multiple-choice, essay, and discussion questions. Also included are excerpts from other college textbooks, additional student examples (including the activities packet), and transparency masters.

InfoTrac College Edition

InfoTrac College Edition, an on-line database with current full-text articles from hundreds of scholarly and popular publications, is available bundled with this text. Both you and your students can receive unlimited on-line use for one academic term. Activities that help students use InfoTrac College Edition are now included in each chapter of the text.

Orientation to College Learning Web Site

Students using this text will have access to the *Orientation to College Learning* book-specific web site. In addition to the activities and end-of-chapter review questions, students will have access to text excerpts from college textbooks for transfer practice activities, the entire activities packet of exercises, handouts on additional topics related to college success such as calculating your GPA, goal setting and action planning forms, time management calendars, a self-scoring

version of the learning style inventory, sample lectures for note-taking practice, practice tests for multiple-choice, matching, and true-false tests, final exam planning calendars, updated web sites for research, college success links, and many other special features.

College Success Web Site

Students using this text will have access to Wadsworth's College Success web site. In addition to a wealth of on-line links and resources, students can access InfoTrac College Edition, a virtual library of hundreds of articles and links to many other useful sites.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE THIRD EDITION

Many people have been instrumental in making the third edition of *Orientation to College Learning* possible. I am especially appreciative of the innovative ideas, concrete suggestions, and continued support of my editor, Elana Dolberg. I am also appreciative of the support of the Wadsworth team: Trudy Brown, Carol O'Connell, and M.J. Wright have been invaluable in getting this book into print. Thank you all. As always, my husband, Mal, has been my greatest support. He is always willing to help out at home, provide objective feedback, and remind me that I should be working. As a public speaking instructor herself, my daughter, Sharon, was able to provide concrete suggestions on the preparation and delivery of oral presentations for Chapter 15. I am so proud to have her as a colleague. I am grateful to my students who have been eager to share their own strategies for success. Their enthusiasm, encouragement, and personal success have been very important to me. After teaching for more than twenty years, I am still learning from them. Many of the new topics and expanded coverage are a direct result of their requests, insight, and suggestions.

I have been very fortunate to have had a group of reviewers who shared their time, expertise, and wonderful suggestions for shaping this third edition. Thank you for your feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the text and your excellent suggestions. Your insight and experience in teaching college success courses have been invaluable in creating this third edition: Mary Lynn Dille, Miami University; Mike Elias, Texas Woman's University; Margaret Hébert, Eastern Connecticut State University; Faith Heinrichs, Central Missouri State University; Cassandra Patillo, Santa Monica College; Barbara N. Sherman, Liberty University; Jaqueline Simon, Rider University; Will Williams III, College of Charleston.

TO THE STUDENT

As you are reading this preface, you are probably feeling excited about beginning your college career. You should be—being in college is an exciting opportunity. A few years ago, I heard someone talking about how foolish some people are to put so much emphasis on their college years. After all, the person said, it's only a few years out of an entire lifetime. But many students remember their college years as being very important and very special times of their lives. Perhaps it's because they are extremely important years. They open many new doors—both socially and professionally—and, in many ways, shape your entire future. Because your college years are such important ones, you may be feeling a little unsure of how successful you will be as a new college student.

Many students begin college unsure of themselves. Some feel unsure about living away from home and being on their own for the first time. Others are uncertain about whether they can attend college while still working full time or caring for their families. Many students worry about how well they will do academically. As you will learn in Chapter 1, college is very different from high school. Many of the study strategies that worked for you in high school may not be as useful in college. In order to make the transition from high school to college as smooth as possible, you may need to learn more about how to study. This text introduces and explains many learning strategies that will help you achieve your academic goals. If you are using this text before or during your first semester in college, you should be well prepared for the challenges ahead of you. By learning and applying new strategies for dealing with college courses, you can achieve your academic goals.

Did you take driver's education in high school? When I ask my students that question, most indicate that they have and that, for the most part, it is still taught in much the same way as it was when I took it. You do the “book part”—learning how to operate the car and the “rules” for safe driving. You then do the “car part”—you actually practice driving in the driver's education car. To be a good driver, you need to do both well. Becoming a successful student isn't that different. You need to do the “book part” (learning new skills and strategies) and the “car part” (applying those strategies to your own college assignments). If you use the new strategies to complete your reading assignments, take your lecture notes, and prepare for and take exams, you'll be successful in college. By trying out each of the new strategies for managing your time, setting goals, taking text

notes, and preparing essay answers, for example, you can evaluate the effectiveness of each method and choose the one that works best for you—you can become a strategic learner.

Once you put your newly learned strategies into practice, you should begin to see your grades improve in each of your courses. This kind of improvement does not result from just being told what to do differently but rather from hard work and persistence in applying effective learning strategies to your own course material. Becoming a successful student takes time and effort—there are no miracles involved. If you are willing to learn new skills and strategies and are also motivated to use them when doing your own course assignments, you, too, can achieve your goals.

Speaking of goals, I have four goals for you in your use of this text. First, I want you to learn new strategies that will make learning and studying much more effective. Second, I want you to use those strategies in your own course work, so that you can achieve your academic goals. Third, I want you to feel better about yourself both as a student and as a person—I want you to have self-confidence. Fourth, I want you to actually learn to enjoy school. Instead of dreading a class, an assignment, or even an exam, I'd like you to look forward to them because you will know how to be successful in taking notes, writing that report, and preparing for and taking that exam. If you apply what you are learning, you should see an improvement in your grades, have more time for leisure activities, feel less stressed about your academic work, feel better about yourself, and, perhaps, even begin to enjoy learning.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

There are many resources available in this text to help you make a successful transition to college learning. Each of the following text resources will provide you with additional information to help you achieve your goals.

CONCEPT MAPS

The concept maps on the first page of the chapter are designed to give you a brief introduction to the main topics in the chapter. Think about what you already know about each of the topics before you begin reading the text. You may also find that they can serve as a template for your own map of the chapter. See Chapter 8 for more information on how to map the information in your textbook.



WHERE ARE YOU NOW? ACTIVITIES

By completing the “Where Are You Now?” activities before reading the chapter, you can evaluate your current strategy use related to the topics in each chapter. Once you identify your strengths and weaknesses, you can focus on those areas where you need the most assistance. You may notice after completing one of these activities that they provide you with an overview of some of the strategies that will be discussed in the chapter. After you complete the chapter or even two or three weeks later, complete the activity again in the text (using a different color pen) or do it on-line at the *Orientation to Learning* web site (www.success.wadsworth.com/vanblerkom).



TIP BLOCKS

The Tip Blocks found in each chapter include additional strategies for both traditional and nontraditional students. You’ll find practical suggestions in each chapter that will save you time, help you apply your strategies to your other course work, or give you tips for making studying more interesting and challenging.

STUDENT EXAMPLES

The student examples shown in the text serve as models for many of the strategies that are described in each chapter. Although it has become almost a cliché, a picture is worth a thousand words to students who aren’t sure how to take lecture notes, create recall questions, and set up study sheets, just to name a few of the applications you may find useful in this text. Occasionally, poor examples are included that contain common errors students make. These examples are designed to keep you from making those same mistakes.

TRANSFER ACTIVITIES

Each chapter contains two or three transfer activities. To complete these activities, you need to apply one or more of the new strategies described in the chapter to your other college course work. By using the strategies in your own work, you will be able to determine which are the most effective for you, while at the same time improving your performance in your other courses.



GROUP ACTIVITIES

The group activities in each chapter are designed to encourage collaborative work. Many students enjoy working with others and find that they learn much more when working in a group. Sharing ideas, resources, and strategies all help you succeed in college. If you haven't already discovered the advantages of collaborative work, you may find that these activities will demonstrate how effective it can be.



NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The nontraditional student activities are designed to help students bridge the gap of time between their last academic experience and college. For some students that time frame may be only five years, but for others it is twenty-five years. Many of these questions help you think about how you studied in the past and what worked or didn't work for you. Other activities focus on helping you balance your time in college with your many other responsibilities. These activities can be used to monitor your strategy use, your learning, and your progress toward your goals.



JOURNAL ACTIVITIES

The journal activities in each chapter are designed to help you reflect on your learning experiences as you move through the text and your course work. By writing about how you applied each of the strategies to your own work, you can evaluate how effective they were in helping you achieve your goals. You may also find that noting any changes that you would make the next time you used the strategy can help you monitor your own learning and your progress toward success. Many students find that writing about their progress is very motivating and provides them with feelings of accomplishment as well.



INFOTRAC COLLEGE EDITION ACTIVITIES

The InfoTrac College Edition activities are designed to help you develop research skills so that you can make use of this powerful full-text database. Beginning with the activity in Chapter 1, each activity is designed to help you search the database in progressively more sophisticated ways. You will learn how to search using both keywords and by using the subject index. This will help you

locate articles on any topic related to your own course work for papers, projects, and presentations.



INTERNET ACTIVITIES

The Internet activities in each chapter are designed to help you become familiar with using the World Wide Web to access information, communicate via e-mail, and do research. In each chapter, you will learn to use the Internet in progressively more sophisticated ways to locate the information that you need. If you aren't already familiar or comfortable with using the Internet, go first to Part 3 of Chapter 15. You'll find an easy-to-follow introduction to communicating on the Internet.



ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE LEARNING BOOK-SPECIFIC WEB SITE

The *Orientation to College Learning* book-specific web site is a new feature to this text. It contains a wealth of information to help you succeed in college. You'll find answers to the multiple-choice and true-false items from the end of chapter reviews. There are handouts on topics such as calculating your GPA, forms for setting goals and action planning, and calendars for time-management activities. You'll also find a self-scoring form of the Learning Style Inventory described in Chapter 1. There are sample lectures and text excerpts for note-taking practice and practice tests for objective and essay exams. You'll also have access to 90 additional practice activities in the activities packet, which is now on-line. Updated web sites for research, college success links, and many other features can be found on this new web site. Check it out at www.success.wadsworth.com/vanblerkom.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

The review questions at the end of each chapter are designed to help you monitor your learning. You'll be able to check the answers to both the true-false and multiple-choice items on the web site listed above. Please keep in mind, though, that these questions do not cover all of the important information in the chapter. They are designed to provide you with some feedback on your reading comprehension and learning, but you need to predict additional questions to prepare for quizzes and exams. I recommend predicting about 25 to 30 additional questions for each chapter. By using the review questions as models, you should

be able to generate these additional questions on your own or within a study group.

A FINAL NOTE

It is always exciting and rewarding when students tell me that the strategies in this book helped them. I am especially delighted to hear about their success in their freshman year. I am often as happy, I think, as they are when they make the Dean's List. If you were successful during your first semester, first year, or even during your college career because of your use of this text, I'd love to hear from you, too. Drop me a note and let me know how *Orientation to College Learning* helped you. Also, if you have any suggestions for how this book can be improved in order to help other students succeed in college, please let me know. You can contact me by writing to:

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