



6<sup>TH</sup>

EDITION

# COLLEGE READING & STUDY SKILLS

MATHLEEN T. McWHORTER



*Sixth  
Edition*

# College Reading and Study Skills

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# Preface

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Beginning college students require a foundation in reading and study skills that will enable them to handle college-level work. *College Reading and Study Skills*, sixth edition, presents the basic techniques for literal and critical comprehension, efficiency, study, note-taking, written assignments, research papers, and taking exams. The reading and study skills I have chosen to present are those most vital to students' success in college. Each unit teaches skills that are immediately usable—all have clear and direct application to students' course work.

More than 25 years of teaching reading and study courses in two- and four-year colleges have demonstrated to me the need for a text that covers both reading and study skills and provides for both instruction and application. This book was written to meet those needs.

Reading and study skills are inseparable. A student must develop skill in each area in order to handle college work successfully. With this goal in mind, I have tried to provide complete coverage of both skills throughout and to show their relationship and interdependency. In doing so, my emphasis has been on direct instruction. My central aim is to teach reading and study through a how-to approach.

## ■ *Content Overview*

The units of the text are interchangeable, enabling the instructor to adapt the material to a variety of instructional sequences.

Part One *Succeeding in College* provides an introduction to the college experience and presents skills, habits, and attitudes that contribute to college success. Topics include active learning, demands and expectations of college, time management, coping with stress, and organizational skills. This section also establishes the theoretical framework of the text by discussing the learning and memory processes and the principles on which many of the skills presented throughout the text are based.

Part Two *Strategies for Active Learning* encourages students to approach reading and learning as active processes involving planning and preparation, information processing, and evaluation and application. Students analyze their learning style and use knowledge about their style to select appropriate reading and

learning strategies. Other topics include monitoring concentration, prereading and predicting, defining purposes for reading, and comprehension assessment.

Part Three Understanding Content focuses on the development of comprehension skills. Paragraph structure is explained and recognition of thought patterns introduced. Strategies for reading graphics and technical material are presented. Critical thinking and reading skills are emphasized. Students are introduced to levels of thinking and guided in asking critical questions and analyzing arguments.

Part Four Learning from Texts teaches skills that enable students to learn from text: how to underline and mark a textbook, how to organize a system of study for various academic disciplines, and how to organize information using outlining, summarizing, and mapping. Methods of learning through writing—paraphrasing, self-testing, and keeping a learning journal—are described.

Part Five Classroom Performance Skills helps students improve their ability to perform in the classroom by describing how to take notes in lectures, how to prepare for and take exams, how to participate in class activities and projects, and how to prepare research papers.

Part Six Vocabulary Development focuses on improving vocabulary. Skills include contextual aids and structural analysis.

Part Seven Reading Efficiency Techniques discusses reading efficiency, reading flexibility, and skimming and scanning. The chapters emphasize the adjustment of rate to suit purpose, desired level of comprehension, and the nature of the material.

## ■ *Special Features*

The following features enhance the text's effectiveness and directly contribute to students' success:

- The text recognizes that many students are visual learners and presents material visually using maps, charts, tables, and diagrams.
- The text emphasizes individual student learning style and encourages students to adapt their reading and study techniques to suit their learning characteristics, as well as the characteristics of the learning task.
- Students learn to problem-solve and explore applications through case studies included at the end of each chapter.
- The text includes a three-stage metacognitive model of active reading and learning: planning and preparation, processing, and evaluation and application. Students are encouraged to establish their concentration, activate prior knowledge, define their purposes, and select appropriate reading strategies prior to reading. Students are shown how to strengthen their comprehension, monitor that comprehension, select what to learn, and organize information. In the final stage, students assess the effectiveness of their learning, revise and modify, and apply and integrate course content.
- The text emphasizes writing as a means of learning. Writing-to-learn strategies include paraphrasing, self-testing, outlining, summarizing, mapping, and keeping a learning journal.
- Exercises often quote excerpts from a wide range of college texts, providing realistic examples of college textbook reading.

- One complete textbook chapter and excerpts from five other textbook chapters are included in the appendices. Portions of the sample chapters are used throughout the book, enabling the student to practice skills with actual textbook material. Other exercises require the student to apply each skill in his or her own course work. The sample textbook material provides an essential link between in-chapter practice and independent application of new techniques. The chapter and excerpts were selected to be representative of college textbook reading assignments.
- Reading as a cognitive process is emphasized. Applying the findings from the research areas of metacognition and prose structure analysis, students are encouraged to approach reading as an active mental process of selecting, processing, and organizing information to be learned.
- A partial answer key is included to make the text adaptable to self-instruction and to provide immediate feedback for students as they complete the practice exercises.
- An instructor's manual gives the instructor a detailed description of the text and offers specific suggestions for classroom use. It includes chapter review quizzes, a complete answer key, and a set of overhead projection materials.
- Interactive computer software accompanies the text and provides students with opportunities to apply specific strategies and receive immediate feedback on their success.

### ▪ *Changes in the Sixth Edition*

The sixth edition of this text includes changes and additions that reflect current emphases and directions in research on adult learning processes.

- A new chapter on critical thinking and critical reading has been added. It begins by describing six levels of thinking at which college students must function and demonstrates each level in academic situations: knowledge, comprehension application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The remainder of the chapter explores critical reading skills in more detail. Students are guided in asking critical questions that focus on identifying the source of the material, distinguishing between fact and opinion, determining the author's purpose, recognizing bias, and evaluating tone. The chapter concludes with a section on analyzing arguments in which students identify the issue, determine the author's position, and evaluate the relevancy and sufficiency of supporting evidence.
- Each chapter concludes with a new "Applying Your Learning" activity; it presents a practical academic situation to which chapter content can be applied. These case studies will generate interest and encourage students to explore applications while exercising their problem-solving skills. These exercises are adaptable to either collaborative learning or writing activities.
- Material in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 has been rearranged to more closely parallel actual reading-learning situations.
- Given the current emphasis on whole language processes and the processing of larger, more meaningful units of language, the chapter on sentence comprehension was dropped and was replaced with the chapter on critical reading and thinking described above.

- The appendices of the previous edition contained two full-length sample textbook chapters. In this edition, the psychology chapter was retained; the second was replaced by five brief chapter excerpts, thereby offering students exposure to a wider range of academic disciplines: biology, sociology, history, business, and speech communication. The shorter excerpts are intended to be more manageable for students while still providing opportunities for outside assignments that require skill application.
- A new approach to time management is presented in Chapter 2. Students are encouraged to construct a term plan that includes all unchanging time commitments. The term plan is the foundation upon which students build weekly plans that schedule reading, review, and preparation time for upcoming quizzes, exams, and papers.

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# Part One

# Succeeding in College

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Many students find their first few weeks in college a confusing and frustrating period. Even excellent students who achieved high grades in high school discover that college is a difficult and challenging experience.

Getting started in college may be difficult for you because it is a completely new situation. The physical surroundings are new and it's easy to feel lost. Many times, too, you don't have many friends with whom to share experiences and ask questions. Also, college classes are conducted differently from high school classes. Your professors may not act like high school teachers, and they may seem to expect different things from you. Finally, you find that you have not only a lot more work and responsibility but also a lot more freedom. You find that the amount of reading, writing, and studying required is much greater than you expected, and you realize you have a lot of choices and decisions to make. You choose your own courses, your own time schedule, and even whether or not to attend class.

The purpose of Part One is to give you some tips on how to minimize the frustration and confusion that most students experience as they begin college. This part includes specific suggestions that will help you start your courses in an effective and organized way.

Each chapter discusses particular aspects of getting started in college. Chapter 1 offers many specific suggestions on how to approach college learning and study and how to get organized to become a successful student. You will also learn how to get information, how to become familiar with policies and procedures that affect you, how to get help with problems, how to take advantage of services available on campus, and how to manage stress. Chapter 2 is concerned with time efficiency and is designed to help you handle the extra demands of the heavy work load required in most of your courses. Chapter 3 identifies the ability to learn as the key to academic success, describes how learning occurs, and presents the basic principles of learning. It also explains how these principles are behind many of the techniques presented throughout this text.





# 1

## How to Succeed

Use this chapter to:

1. Learn what is expected of you in college.
2. Become an active learner.
3. Get off to the right start.
4. Learn about campus facilities and resources.
5. Become familiar with your textbooks.
6. Learn to manage stress.

To be successful in a new part-time job, you try to learn quickly what the job involves and how to perform specific tasks. You are expected to be organized and to work effectively and efficiently. You must also become familiar with other employees and with the facilities in which you will be working. You must learn where items are kept and how to get things done. Similarly, as you begin college, you must learn what is expected of you and how to accomplish it. College is a new experience, and to be successful you must learn what it involves. Learning through reading and studying is your primary task, and you must learn to handle this task efficiently. It is also important that you get started in an organized manner, thereby making the learning easier and more effective. You must become familiar with the facilities and resources available on your campus. And you will need to learn to deal with stress.

### ■ *College: New Demands and Expectations*

College is a unique learning experience. Whether you have just completed high school or are returning to college with work experiences or family responsibilities, you will face new demands and expectations in college. The following sections describe these demands and discuss how to cope with each.

### ■ *Set Your Own Operating Rules*

College is very different from your other educational experiences and from jobs you may have held because there are few clear limits, rules, or controls. There are no defined work hours. Except for scheduled classes, your time is your own. Often there are no penalties for missing classes or failing to complete assignments. You do what you want, when you want, if you want to at all. For many students, this new freedom requires some adjustment. Some students

feel they should spend all their free time studying; others put off study or never quite find the right time for it.

One of the best ways to handle this freedom is to establish your own set of operating rules. For example, you might decide to attend all classes, regardless of whether attendance is taken. Here are other examples of rules successful students have set for themselves.

Study at least three hours each day or evening.

Start studying for a major examination at least a week before the exam.

Complete all homework assignments regardless of whether you get credit for them.

Make review a part of each study session.

Read all assigned chapters before the class in which they will be discussed.

Write your rules on paper and post them above your desk as a constant reminder. Consider these as goals and work toward accomplishing each.

## **EXERCISE 1**

**DIRECTIONS:** *Analyze the assignments and requirements of each of the courses you are taking this semester. Make a list of five to ten operating rules you intend to follow this term or semester. Include at least one rule that applies to each of your courses. See if these rules work during the next two weeks and make any needed changes.*

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### ▪ *Take Responsibility for Your Own Learning*

In college, learning is mainly up to you. Instructors function as guides. They define and explain what is to be learned, but you do the learning. Class time is far shorter than in high school. Often there isn't enough time to provide drills, practices, and reviews of factual course content. Instead, college class time is used primarily to introduce content that is to be learned and to discuss ideas. Instructors expect you to learn the material and to be prepared to discuss it in class. *When, where, and how* you learn are your decisions. This text will help you make these decisions. Throughout you will be presented with numerous learning strategies and how to apply them.

### ***Focus on Concepts***

Each course you take will seem to have an endless amount of facts, statistics, dates, definitions, formulas, rules, and principles to learn. It is easy to become convinced that these are enough to learn and to become a robot

learner—memorizing facts from texts and lectures, then recalling them on exams and quizzes. Actually, factual information is only a starting point, a base from which to approach the real content of a course. Most college instructors expect you to go beyond facts to analysis: to consider what the collection of facts and details *means*. Many students “can’t see the forest for the trees”; they get caught up in specifics and fail to see the larger, more important concepts. Be sure to keep these questions in mind as you read and study:

Why do I need to know this?

Why is this important?

What principle or trend does this illustrate?

How can I use this information?

How does this fit in with other course content?

### ***Focus on Ideas, Not Right Answers***

Through previous schooling, many students have come to expect their answers to be either right or wrong. They assume that learning is limited to a collection of facts and that their mastery of the course is measured by the number of right answers they have learned. When faced with an essay question such as the following, they are lost:

Defend or criticize the arguments that are offered in favor of capital punishment. Refer to any readings that you have completed.

There is no one right answer: You can either defend the arguments or criticize them. The instructor who asks this question expects you to think and to provide a reasoned, logical, consistent response using information acquired through your reading. Here are a few more examples of questions for which there are no single correct answers.

Do animals think?

Would you be willing to reduce your standard of living by 15 percent if the United States could thereby eliminate poverty? Defend your response.

Imagine a society in which everyone has exactly the same income. You are the manager of an industrial plant. What plans, policies, or programs would you implement that would motivate your employees to work?

### ***Evaluate New Ideas***

Throughout college you will continually meet new ideas; you will agree with some and disagree with others. Don’t make the mistake of accepting or rejecting a new idea, however, until you have really explored it and have considered its assumptions and implications. Ask questions such as:

What evidence is available in support of this idea?

What opposing evidence is available?

How does my personal experience relate to this idea?

What additional information do I need in order to make a decision?



## ■ *Becoming an Active Learner*

A freshman who had always thought of himself as a B student was getting low Cs and Ds in his business course. The instructor gave weekly quizzes; each was a practical problem to solve. Each week the student memorized his lecture notes and carefully reread each assigned chapter in his textbook. When he spoke with his instructor about his low grades, the instructor told him his study methods were not effective and that he needed to become more active and involved with the subject matter. Memorizing and rereading are passive, inactive approaches. Instead the instructor suggested that he think about content, ask questions, anticipate practical uses, solve potential problems, and draw connections between ideas.

### ■ *Active Versus Passive Learning*

How did you learn to ride a bike, play racquetball, or change a tire? In each case you learned by doing, by active participation. College learning requires similar active involvement and participation. Active learning, then, is expected in most college courses and can often make the difference between barely average grades and top grades. Figure 1-1 lists common college learning situations and shows the difference between active and passive learning.

The examples in Figure 1-1 show that passive learners do not carry the learning process far enough. They do not go beyond what instructors tell them to do. They fail to think about, organize, and react to course content.

Throughout the remainder of this text you will discover strategies for becoming a more active learner and active reader. You will see that reading and learning is an ongoing decision-making process. You will learn to analyze the task at hand, select appropriate reading and learning strategies, carry them out, and see if they work for you.

**Figure 1-1**  
**Characteristics of Passive and Active Learners**

	<b>Passive Learners</b>	<b>Active Learners</b>
Class lectures	Write down what the instructor says	Decide what is important to write down
Textbook assignments	Read	Read, think, ask questions, try to connect ideas
Studying	Reread	Make outlines and study sheets, predict exam questions, look for trends and patterns
Writing class assignments	Only follow the professor's instructions	Try to discover the significance of the assignment, look for the principles and concepts it illustrates
Writing term papers	Do only what is expected to get a good grade	Try to expand their knowledge and experience with a topic and connect it to the course objective or content