

Becoming a
master
student

SEVENTH EDITION

Tools, techniques, hints,

ideas, illustrations,

examples, methods,

procedures, processes,

skills, resources, and

suggestions for success.

E L L I S

Becoming a master student

SEVENTH EDITION

Tools, techniques, hints,

ideas, illustrations,

examples, methods.

suggestions for success.

E L L I S

Copyright © 1994 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without the prior written permission of Houghton Mifflin Company unless such copying is expressly permitted by federal copyright law. Address inquiries to College Permissions, Houghton Mifflin Company, 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116-3764.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 93-80634

ISBN: 0-395-69293-8

7 8 9 - VH - 97 96

Notice: *Becoming a Master Student* was previously titled *Survival Skills for Students* and before that *Survival Tools for College*.

This book is now available in Spanish (fifth edition) and French (sixth edition). Contact your Houghton Mifflin sales representative or College Survival for more information.

COLLEGE SURVIVAL
A Program of Houghton Mifflin Company
P.O. Box 8306
Rapid City, SD 57709-8306



As part of Houghton Mifflin's ongoing commitment to the environment,
this text has been printed on recycled paper.

FOR THE MOST PART, STUDENTS HAVE CREATED THIS BOOK. The First Edition of *Becoming a Master Student* came from notes that I collected while teaching a course to students. They ended up teaching me more than I ever imagined there was to learn about student success—while I was supposed to be teaching them. Since that edition, hundreds of thousands of students have used this book, and their continuing input has dramatically changed it. To all of those students of different ages and from a variety of cultures and ethnic groups, I send my heartfelt thanks.

In previous editions of this book, I have listed many of the educators who have contributed significantly to the strategies and insights offered to students. Unfortunately, this list has gotten so long that I cannot list, by name, the hundreds of significant contributors. Some educators have offered an idea or two as a part of an article. Others have provided the inspiration and much of the content for entire articles. Still others have offered suggestions which have totally rearranged the structure and outline of this text. Thank you all.

During the last 14 years, I have worked day to day with dozens of people who have contributed dramatically to the creation of this text. They have lent ideas, logistical support, project management, consultation, and design. To all of those people, I want you to know that I know that this book would never have been produced without you. There are a few people out of the dozens I have worked with who have made such a difference in this book that to leave them unnamed would border on unethical. In particular, I thank and acknowledge the work of Doug Toft, Bill Fleming, Stan Lankowitz,

Jeff Swaim, Bill Harlan, Mary Maisey-Ireland, Larry David, Patricia Breen, Adel Brown, Judith McLane, Robbie Murchison, Steve Fessler, Judy Maisey, James Anderson, Wayne Zako, Karen Marie Erickson, and Shirley Wileman-Conrad.

For the photography and illustration in this book, I particularly thank John Backlund, Mary Bergherr, Tim Blough, Jayne Erickson, Kathy Rusynyk, Sid and Amy Spelts, Mike Speiser, Susan Turnbull, and Teresa Verburg.

For their contribution to my life and personal growth, I thank my wife, Trisha Waldron, and my friends Stan Lankowitz and Barb Churchill. I also treasure what I have learned from my children, Sara, Elizabeth, Snow, and Berry, and the constant encouragement of my parents, Maryellen and Ken.

I know that no book and no set of ideas comes from a single person, and my intention is to continue to share with others what all of the people I have mentioned here shared with me.

Dave Ellis

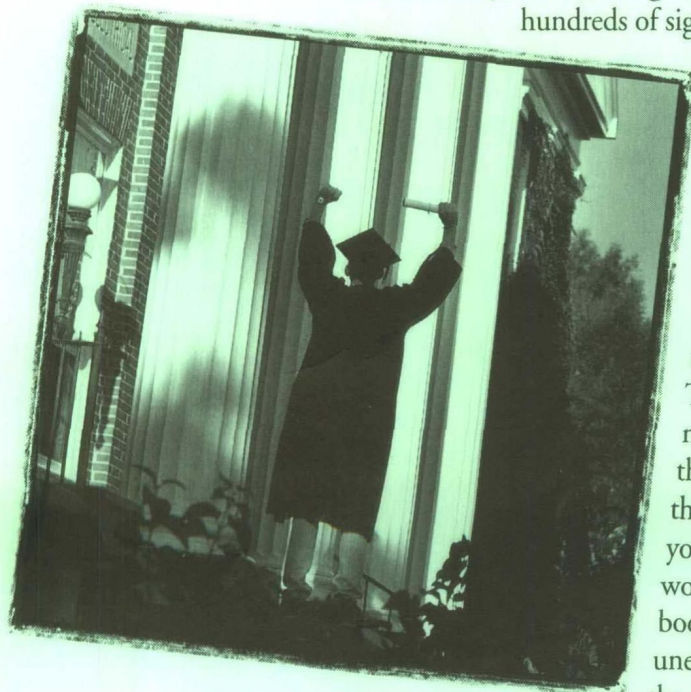


Table of Contents

Introduction

This book is worthless	1
How to get the most out of this book	4

Chapter 1 First Step

First Step: Truth is a key to mastery	7
If you skipped the Introduction	8
The Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System	10
Seven Discovery Statement guidelines	12
Seven Intention Statement guidelines	13
How to change a habit	14
The value of higher education	16
F is for feedback, not failure	18
Motivation or "I'm just not in the mood"	18
Stay tuned to these networks	24
Power Process #1: Ideas are tools	26
The master student	28
Maslow's qualities of a self-actualizing person	30
Master Student: Benjamin Franklin	32
Quiz	33
Learning Styles Application	35

Chapter 2 Diversity

Diversity is a fact—and a value	37
Diversity is a reality	38
Communicating across cultures	40
"But I don't know what I want to do"—Choosing a major	43
Adapting to the culture of higher education	44
Learn the language of higher education	45
The art of reentry—Going back to school as an older student	46
Dealing with sexism and sexual harassment	48
Students with disabilities—Ask for what you want	50
Learning styles—Discovering how you learn	52

Power Process #2: Choose

your conversations and your community	56
Master Student: Charlayne Hunter-Gault	58
Quiz	59
Learning Styles Application	61

Chapter 3 Time

You've got the time	63
How to plan your time	70
Time management for right-brained people	72
Twenty-five ways to get the most out of now	74
Keep going?	79
Gearing up: Using a long-term planner	82
The seven day anti-procrastination plan	85
Studying with children underfoot	86
The ABC daily to-do's (or working your A's off)	88
Power Process #3: Be here now	90
Master Student: Malcolm X	92
Quiz	93
Learning Styles Application	95

Chapter 4 Memory

You never forget	97
Twenty memory techniques	100
Give your secret brain a chance	105
Notable failures	105
Set a trap for your memory	106
Remembering names	107
Mnemonic devices	108
Power Process #4: Love your problems	110
Master Student: Helen Keller	112
Quiz	113
Learning Styles Application	115

Chapter 5 Reading

Muscle Reading	117
How Muscle Reading works	118
The Universal Law of Reading	120
Getting to the bones of your book with concept maps	125
Reading fast	126
When reading is tough	127

Read with a dictionary in your lap	128
------------------------------------	-----

Reading English as a second language	129
--------------------------------------	-----

Power Process #5: Notice your pictures and let them go	130
---	-----

Master Student: Barbara Jordan	132
Quiz	133

Learning Styles Application	135
-----------------------------	-----

Chapter 6 Notes

The note-taking process flows	137
Observe	138
Record	141
Review	146
Improving your handwriting	149
When instructors talk fast	150
Taking notes on reading	151
Power Process #6: I create it all	152
Master Student: Rudolfo Anaya	156
Quiz	157
Learning Styles Application	159

Chapter 7 Tests

Disarm tests	161
What to do before the test	162
What to do during the test	164
Words to watch for in essay questions	167
Have some fun	167
How to predict test questions	168
Notable failures—Part two	171
Let go of test anxiety	172
Special techniques for math and science tests	176
How to cram (even though you shouldn't)	177
Cooperative learning—Study with people	178
Power Process #7: Detach	180
Master Student: Golda Meir	182
Quiz	183
Learning Styles Application	185

Chapter 8 Thinking

Critical thinking: A survival skill	187
Finding "Aha!"—Creativity fuels critical thinking	189
Tangram	189

Techniques for creative thinking	190	The fine art of conflict resolution	248	Find money	302
Steps to critical thinking	194	Conflict resolution in a nutshell	251	We live like royalty	303
Create on your feet	197	Relationships can work	252	Free fun	307
Uncovering assumptions	198	Relationships change	253	Planning for the future	311
Solving problems—		Create your instructor	254	If you're in trouble	317
Try the four P's	200	You deserve compliments	255	Power Process #12: The process	
How to fool yourself—Six		Seven steps to effective		is always the same	318
common mistakes in logic	202	complaints	257	Master Student: Fred Smith	320
Gaining skill at decision making	203	Criticism really can be		Quiz	321
Overcoming math and		constructive	257	Learning Styles Application	323
science anxiety	204	We are all leaders	258		
Solving math and science		Leaders on leadership	260	Chapter 13 Resources	
problems	208	Power Process #10: Employ		Supercharge your education	325
Power Process #8: Planning sets		your word	262	Community resources	326
you free	210	Master Student: Fran Worden		On-campus resources	327
Strategies for planning	212	Henry	264	Shake hands with your computer	328
Master Student: Margaret Mead	214	Quiz	265	Library: The buried treasure	330
Quiz	215	Learning Styles Application	267	Extracurricular activities—	
Learning Styles Application	217			Reap the benefits	333
Chapter 9 Writing		Chapter 11 Health		Eight reasons to celebrate	
Writing well pays	219	Take care of your machine	269	mistakes	334
Phase 1: Creating something		Your machine: Fuel it	270	Power Process #13: Find a bigger	
from nothing	220	Your machine: Move it	271	problem...or a smaller one	336
Phase 2: Getting down to it	223	Your machine: Rest it	272	Master Student: Lauren Elder	338
Phase 3: Polishing your creation	225	Your machine: Observe it	273	Quiz	339
Misplaced modifier poses threat		Your machine: Protect it	274	Learning Styles Application	341
of suffocation	226	Crazed glazed donut runs amok	279		
Seven steps to nonsexist writing	228	The experts recommend		Chapter 14	
Giving credit where credit is		seven dietary guidelines	279	What Next?	
due—Avoiding the high cost		Some facts	280	Now that you're done—Begin	343
of plagiarism	229	Alcohol, tobacco, and		Attitudes, affirmations and	
Learn to type	229	drugs: The truth	280	visualizations	346
Writing and delivering speeches	230	Seeing the full scope of addiction	282	Attitude replacements	347
Discover the joys of		Where to turn for more		Taking notes on your journey—	
word processing	233	information on recovery	283	The art of journal writing	350
The cheapest word processor	233	Advertising can be dangerous		Career planning—Begin now	352
Power Process #9: Be a fool	234	to your health	284	Contributing: The art	
Master Student: William		Emotional pain is not a sickness	285	of selfishness	360
Nolen	236	Power process #11: Surrender	286	Power Process #14: Be it	362
Quiz	237	Master Student: May Lemke	288	Master Student: Raul Julia	364
Learning Styles Application	239	Quiz	289	Quiz	365
		Learning Styles Application	291	Learning Styles Application	367
Chapter 10		Chapter 12 Money			
Relationships		Money in—Money out	293	Bibliography	368
The communication loop	241	Increase money in	295	Index	370
Listening	243	Decrease money out	297	Quiz Answers	373
Sending	245	It's worth it	300		
Five ways to say "I"	246	You can pay for it	301		

THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS BOOK began with the sentence: *This book is worthless.*

Many students thought this was a trick to get their attention. It wasn't. Others thought it was reverse psychology. It wasn't that, either. Still others thought it meant that the book was worthless if they didn't read it. It's more than that.

The book is worthless even if you read it, if reading is all you do. What was true of that first edition is true of this one. Until you take action and use the

This book is worthless

ideas in it, *Becoming a Master Student* really is worthless.

You probably won't take action and use the ideas until you are convinced that you have something to gain. The main purpose of this introduction is to sell you on the value of committing yourself to spend the energy to use this book actively. Before you stiffen up and resist, the purpose of this sales pitch is not to separate you from your money. You already bought the book. Now you can get something for your money by committing yourself to take action—in other words, commit yourself to become a master student. Here's what's in it for you.

“ ”

Change and growth take place when a person has risked himself and dares to become involved with experimenting with his own life.

—HERBERT OTTO

Pitch #1: You can save money now and make more later.

Start with money. Your college education is one of the most expensive things you will ever buy. Typically, it costs students \$30 to \$70 an hour to sit in class. (See Exercise #30 on page 300.) Unfortunately, many students think their classes aren't even worth 50 cents an hour.

As a master student, you control the value you get out of your education, and that value can be considerable. The joy of learning aside, college graduates make about \$700,000 more during their lifetimes than their nondegreed peers. It pays to be a master student.

Pitch #2: You can rediscover the natural learner in you.

Joy is important too. As you become a master student, you will learn how to learn in the most effective way possible—by discovering the joyful, natural learner within you.

Children are great natural students. They quickly learn complex skills, such as language, and they have

fun doing it. For them, learning is a high-energy process involving experimentation, discovery, and sometimes, broken dishes. Then comes school. For some students, drill and drudgery replace discovery and dish breaking. Learning can become a drag. You can use this book to reverse that process and rediscover what you knew as a child—that laughter and learning are not mutually exclusive.

Sometimes learning does take effort, especially in college. As you become a master student, you will learn how to get the most out of that effort.

Pitch #3: You can choose from hundreds of techniques.

Becoming a Master Student is packed with hundreds of practical, nuts-and-bolts techniques. And you can begin using them immediately. For example, during your Textbook Reconnaissance on page vi you practiced three powerful learning techniques in one 15-minute exercise. (If you didn't do the Textbook Reconnaissance, it's not too late to get your money's worth from page vi. Do it now.) If you doze in lectures, drift during tests, or dawdle on term papers, you can use the ideas in this book to become a more effective student.

Not all these ideas will work for you. That's why there are so many of them in *Becoming a Master Student*. You can experiment with the techniques. As you discover what works, you will develop a unique style of learning that you can use for the rest of your life.

Pitch #4: You get the best suggestions from thousands of students.

The concepts and techniques in this book are not here because learning theorists, educators, and psychologists say they work. They are here because tens of thousands of students from all kinds of backgrounds tried them and say they work. These are people who dreaded giving

speeches, couldn't read their own notes, and couldn't remember where the ileocecal valve was. Then they figured out how to solve these problems, which was the hard part. Now you can use their ideas.

Pitch #5: You can learn about you.

The process of self-discovery is an important theme in *Becoming a Master Student*. Throughout the book you can use Discovery Statements and Intention Statements for everything from organizing your desk to choosing long-term goals. Studying for an organic chemistry quiz is a lot easier with a clean desk and a clear idea of the course's importance to you.

Pitch #6: You can use a proven product.

The first six editions of this book were successful for tens of thousands of students. In schools where it was widely used, the dropout rate decreased as much as 25 percent and in some cases, 50 percent. Student feedback has been positive. In particular, students with successful histories have praised the techniques in this book.

Pitch #7: You can learn the secret of student success.

If this sales pitch still hasn't persuaded you to actively use this book, maybe it's time to reveal the Secret of Student Success. (Provide your own drum roll here.) The secret is, there are no secrets. Perhaps the ultimate formula is to give up formulas and keep inventing.

The strategies and tactics that successful students use are well known. You have hundreds of them at your fingertips right now, in this book. Use them. Modify them. Invent new ones. You're the authority on what works for you.

However, what makes any technique work is commitment—and action. Without them, the pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are just 2.2 pounds of expensive mulch. Add your participation to the mulch, and these pages are priceless.



JOURNAL ENTRY #1 DISCOVERY STATEMENT

Success is a choice. Your choice. To get to what you want, it helps to know what you want. That is the purpose of this Journal Entry.

Select a time and place when you know you will not be disturbed for at least 20 minutes. (The library is a good place to do this.) Relax for two or three minutes, clearing your mind. Then complete the following sentences and keep writing. Write down everything you want to get out of school. Write down everything you want your education to enable you to do after you finish school.

When you run out of things to write, stick with it just a bit longer. Be willing to experience a little discomfort. Keep writing. What you discover might be well worth the extra effort.

You can begin choosing success right now by choosing a date, time, and place to complete this Journal Entry. Write your choice here and block out the time on your calendar.

Date:

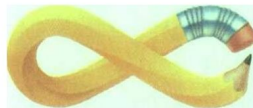
Time:

Place:

What I want from my education is . . .

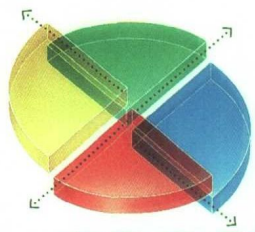
When I complete my education, I want to be able to . . .

I also want . . .



JOURNAL ENTRY #2 DISCOVERY STATEMENT

On a separate piece of paper, write a description of a time in your life when you learned or did something well. This situation need not be related to school. Describe the details of the situation, including the place, time, and people involved. Describe how you felt about it, how it looked to you, how it sounded. Describe the physical feelings you associate with the event. Do the same for emotions.



How to get the most out of this book



1. Rip 'em out. The pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are perforated because some of the information here is too important to leave in the book and some of it your instructor may want to see. For example, Journal Entry #1 asks you to write some important things you want to get out of your education. To keep yourself focused, you could rip that page out and post it on your bathroom mirror or some place where you'll see it several times a day.

You can reinsert the page by just sticking it into the spine of the book; it will hold. A piece of tape will fix it in place.

2. Skip around. You can use this book in several different ways. Read it straight through, or pick it up, turn to any page and find an idea you can use. Look for ideas you can use right now. If you're having trouble listening to boring lectures, skip directly to "Notice your environment" on page 139 in Chapter Six: Notes. If you suspect alcohol might be getting in the way of your education, read "Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs: The truth" on page 280.

3. If it works, use it. If it doesn't, lose it. If there are sections of the book that don't apply to you at all, skip them. Even some techniques that do seem relevant might not work for you. However, when you are committed to getting value from this book, even an idea that seems irrelevant or ineffective at first can turn out to be a powerful tool. Topics that aren't relevant now may be just what you want next year or three years from now. Asking "How can I use this?" can turn almost any situation into a valuable experience.

4. Rewrite this book. Here's an alternative strategy to the one above. If an idea doesn't work for you, rewrite it. Change the exercises to fit your needs. Create a new technique by combining several others. Create a technique out of thin air! Ask questions, then find the answers. And don't forget to send in the results. Your ideas may appear in the next edition.

5. Put yourself into the book. As you read about techniques in this book, invent your own examples, starring yourself in the title role. For example, as you were reading the explanation of Exercise #1 on page vi, you might have pictured yourself using this technique on your world history textbook. Sometimes it pays to let your mind wander.

6. Work with others. Talk with your classmates about what works and what doesn't. Peer pressure is often characterized as negative. You can turn that idea around. Form a group of students who support each other in mastering the art of learning.

7. Yuk it up. Going to school is a big investment. The stakes are high. It's OK to be serious about that, but you don't have to go to school on the deferred-fun program. A master student celebrates learning, and one of the best ways to do that is to have a laugh now and then.

8. Own this book. Write your name and address on the first page of this book now, and don't stop there. As you complete Journal Entries and exercises, you create a record of what you want to get out of school and how you intend to get it. Every time your pen touches a page, you move closer to mastery of learning.

9. Do the exercises. Action makes this book work. To get the most out of an exercise, read the instructions carefully before you begin. To get the most out of this book, do most of the exercises. More importantly, avoid feeling guilty if you skip some. And by the way, it's never too late to go back and do those.

These exercises invite you to write, touch, feel, move, see, search, ponder, speak, listen, recall, choose, commit, and create. You might even sing and dance. Learning works best when it involves action. People learn best when, along with their brains, they use their arms, legs, eyes, ears, and noses in the process.

True education is not about cramming material into your brain. Education is the process of expanding your capabilities, of bringing yourself out into the world. Doing the exercises brings you into the heart of that process.

10. Get used to a new look and tone. This book looks different from traditional textbooks. *Becoming a Master Student* presents major ideas in magazine-style articles. You will discover lots of lists, blurbs, one-liners, pictures, charts, graphs, cartoons, and even a joke or two. Also, this edition departs from previous ones by including color throughout the text. This was done not only to provide visual interest but also to underscore in a graphic way the importance of racial diversity—one of the subjects of Chapter Two.

The icons and key visuals in this book carry special meanings. Journal Entries are introduced by a drawing of a twisted pencil. This is a sign of infinity, symbolizing the idea that journaling is a process that never ends. The picture of the running shoe that graces the exercises throughout this book indicates the action that makes for effective learning.

One more note: As a strategy for avoiding sexist language, this book alternates the use of feminine and masculine pronouns.

11. Practice critical thinking. Throughout this book are activities labeled *Practicing Critical Thinking*. Look for them next to the icon of the “thinker” inside a light bulb, who’s there to encourage contemplation and constant problem solving. Use these exercises to develop that often unused ability, one that we all have and can develop endlessly: thinking. Also note that other elements of this text promote critical thinking, including exercises and Journal Entries.

12. Learn about learning styles. Check out the Learning Style Applications at the end of each chapter. These are included to increase your awareness of your preferred learning styles and to help you explore new styles. Each exercise will guide you through experiencing four specific learning styles as applied to the content of the chapter. The four-color icon for these applications represents those styles. For a detailed explanation of these styles, see “Learning styles—Discovering how you learn” in Chapter Two.



EXERCISE #2 COMMITMENT

This book is worthless without your action. One powerful way to begin taking action is to make a commitment. Conversely, without commitment, sustained action is unlikely. The result is a worthless book. Therefore, in the interest of saving your valuable time and energy, this exercise gives you a chance to declare your level of involvement up front. From the choices below, choose the sentence that best reflects your commitment to using this book. Write the number in the space provided at the end of the list.

1. “Well, I’m reading this book right now, aren’t I?”
2. “I will skim the book and read the interesting parts.”
3. “I will read the book and think about how some of the techniques might apply to me.”
4. “I will read the book, think about it, and do the exercises that look interesting.”
5. “I will read the book, do exercises, and complete some of the Journal Entries.”
6. “I will read the book, do exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
7. “I will read the book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
8. “I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
9. “I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and experiment vigorously with most of the suggestions in order to discover what works best for me.”
10. “I promise to get value from this book, beginning with Exercise #1: ‘Textbook Reconnaissance,’ even if I have to rewrite the sections I don’t like and even if I have to invent new techniques of my own.”

Enter your commitment level and today’s date here:
Commitment level _____ Date _____

If you selected commitment level 1 or 2, you might consider passing this book on to a friend. If your commitment level is a 9 or 10, you are on your way to terrific success in school. If you are somewhere in between, experiment with the techniques; and if you find they work, consider returning to this exercise and raising your level of commitment.

1

First Step

In this chapter you can learn about a potent strategy for personal change: telling the truth about your current circumstances. Doing so allows you to set meaningful goals in life. Also included are some ideas about the value of a liberal arts education, motivation, and self-discovery. Exercises in this chapter give you a chance to discover where you are and where you want to be.

“ ”

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

“ ”

You either change things or you don't. Excuses rob you of power and induce apathy.

—AGNES WHISTLING ELK



JOURNAL ENTRY #3 DISCOVERY STATEMENT

Perhaps you know people who've tried to repair their cars without knowing what parts they needed. Or maybe you've tried to buy clothes for someone without knowing that person's size and preferred styles. In such cases we can be more effective when we know what the specific problem is or what the people involved truly want.

Describe a time when you wanted to solve a problem but lacked specific information about the nature of that problem. This could also be a time when you had no clear idea of the outcome you desired.

Now describe a time when, based on your diagnosis and desired results, you were able to accurately diagnose a problem and efficiently solve it.

Succeeding in this course—and in school—uses the same process. It begins with identifying the skills you already have, along with the new skills you want to acquire. It also involves telling the truth about any problem you face right now and creating a plan to solve it.

Take time now to preview the Discovery Wheel exercise on page 20. Then list several specific benefits you can gain by reading and applying this chapter.

I discovered that I . . .

First Step: Truth is a key to mastery

“ ”
*In oneself lies the whole
world, and if you know
how to look and learn,
then the door is there and
the key is in your hand.
Nobody on earth can
give you either that key
or the door to open,
except yourself.*

—J. KRISHNAMURTI

THE FIRST STEP TECHNIQUE IS SIMPLE: Tell the truth about who you are and what you want. End of discussion. Now proceed to Chapter Two.

Well, it's not quite that simple.

The First Step is one of the most powerful tools in this book. It magnifies the power of all the other techniques. It is a key to becoming a master student.

Unfortunately, a First Step is easier to explain

than it is to use, and it's not that easy to explain. "Telling the

truth" sounds like pie-in-the-sky moralizing, but there is nothing pie-in-the-sky about a First Step. It is a practical, down-to-earth way to change behavior. No technique in this book has been field-tested more often or more successfully—or under tougher circumstances. Just ask almost any recovering alcoholic.

A fundamental principle of Alcoholics

Anonymous is that alcoholics must tell the truth about their drinking before they can begin to change. This is an essential ingredient in AA's "First Step" and in its entire Twelve Step program. Today, people recovering from addictions to food, drugs, sex, work, and whatever else human beings can abuse, employ the same principle. They use First Steps to change their behavior for one reason: First Steps work.

Compared to conquering addictions, training to be a master student is a snap. But let's be truthful. It's not easy to tell the truth about ourselves. We might have to admit that we're afraid of algebra or that we never complete term papers on time. It's tough to admit weaknesses.

*If you
skipped the
Introduction . . .*

Some people think introductions are useless clutter. The Introduction starting on page vi is an important part of this book. It shows you how to get your money's worth. Please read the Introduction. Here's what awaits you:

- *Exercise #1: Textbook reconnaissance*
- *This book is worthless*
- *How to get the most out of this book*
- *Exercise #2: Commitment*

Please read it now.

For some people, it's even harder to admit strengths. Maybe they don't want to brag. Maybe they're attached to poor self-images. The reasons don't matter. The point is, using the First Step system in *Becoming a Master Student* means telling the truth about your good qualities too.

Making this technique work also means telling the truth about what you want.

Sounds easy, you say? Many people would rather eat nails. If you don't believe it, find three fellow students and ask them what they want to get out of their educations. Be prepared for hemming and hawing, vague generalities, and maybe even a helping of pie-in-the-sky a la mode.

On the other hand, if one of them tells you she wants a degree in journalism with double minors in earth sciences and Portuguese so she can work as a reporter covering the environment in Brazil, chances are, you've found a master student.

The details of her vision are a clue to her mastery. Goals are more powerful when they are specific. So are First Steps, whether they are verbal or written. For example, if you want to improve your note-taking skills, you might write, "I am an awful note taker." It would be more effective to write, "I can't read 80 percent of the notes I took in American Constitutional History last week and I have no idea what was important in that class."

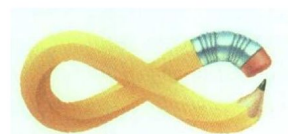
Be just as specific about what you want. You might declare, "I want to take legible notes that help me predict what questions will be on the final exam."

In Exercise #4: "The Discovery Wheel" and Journal Entry #3 you can take a giant First Step. You can tell the truth about what kind of student you are and what kind of student you want to become. If that prospect puts a knot in your stomach, that's good. Notice that knot. It is your friend. It is reminding you that telling the truth about yourself takes

courage, which is an important characteristic of a master student.

Your courage will be rewarded. The Discovery Wheel and the rest of the exercises in this book are your First Steps to tapping resources you never imagined you had. You can even take a First Step to mapping out the rest of your life with a detailed career plan. Just turn to page 355.

They're all First Steps—no kidding. It's just that simple. The truth has power.



**JOURNAL ENTRY #4
INTENTION STATEMENT**

Review Exercise #1: "Textbook reconnaissance." Consider the articles in this book that you thought might be valuable. Choose the one from which you think you can get the most immediate, practical benefit and scan that article until you come to a specific technique you can use. Write an Intention Statement in this space concerning how you will use that technique within the next week. Include when you intend to use it.

For example, if you listed the article called "When reading is tough," you could use any of the techniques suggested for difficult reading assignments. If you have a tough computer science course, you might choose to form a support group to discuss reading assignments. In that case, you might write, "I intend to contact four other students after class tomorrow about forming a group to study computer science."

I intend to use the study technique . . .

I will use it at these times . . .



EXERCISE #3 TAKING THE FIRST STEP

The purpose of this exercise is to give you a chance to discover the positive as well as the negative aspects of yourself. It is the most difficult exercise in this book. To make the exercise worthwhile, do it with courage.

Some people suggest that looking at negative aspects is counter to positive thinking. Well, perhaps. Positive thinking is a great technique. So is seeing the truth, especially when we see the whole picture—even though a realistic picture of ourselves may include some extremely negative points.

If you admit that you can't read, and that's the truth, then you have taken a strong positive First Step to becoming a successful reader. On the other hand, if you say that you are a terrible math student, and that's not the truth, then you are programming yourself to accept unnecessary failure. The point is, tell the truth.

This exercise is similar to each Journal Entry–Discovery Statement appearing throughout this text. The difference is that in this case, for reasons of confidentiality, you don't write your discoveries in the book.

Be brave. If you approach this exercise with courage, you are likely to write down some things you don't want others to read. You may even write down some truths about yourself that could get you into trouble. Do this exercise on separate pieces of paper, then hide or destroy them.

To make this exercise work, follow these three suggestions:

1. Be specific. It is not effective to write, "I could improve my communication skills." Of course you can. Instead, write down precisely what you can do to improve your communication skills. For example, "I can spend more time really listening while the other person is talking, instead of thinking about what I'm going to say next."

2. Look beyond the classroom. What goes on outside of school often has the greatest impact on your ability to be an effective student.

3. Be courageous. This exercise is a waste of time if done half-heartedly. Be willing to risk. Sometimes you may open a door that reveals a part of yourself that you didn't want to admit was there. The power of this technique is that once you know what the "it" is, you can do something.

Part 1

Time yourself, and for 10 minutes, write as fast as you can and complete the following sentences with anything that comes to mind. Complete each sentence at least 10 times. If you get stuck, don't stop; just write something—even if it's crazy.

*It is ineffective when I . . .
It doesn't work when I . . .
I could change . . .*

Part 2

When you have completed the first part of the exercise, review what you have written and cross off things that don't make any sense. The sentences that remain represent possible goals for your experience as a master student.

Part 3

Here's the tough part. Time yourself, and for 10 minutes, write as fast as you can. Complete the following sentences with anything that comes to mind. As in Part 1, complete each sentence at least 10 times and just keep writing, even if it sounds silly.

*I am very good at . . .
It is effective when I . . .
Something very positive about me is . . .*

Part 4

Review your list and circle the things that really fit. This is a good list to keep for those times when you question your own value and worth.

The Discovery and Intention

One way to become a better student is to grit your teeth, grunt, and try harder. There is another way. You can use the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System to increase your effectiveness with the least possible struggle. It's a way to focus your energy, and it's closely related to the idea of taking a First Step.

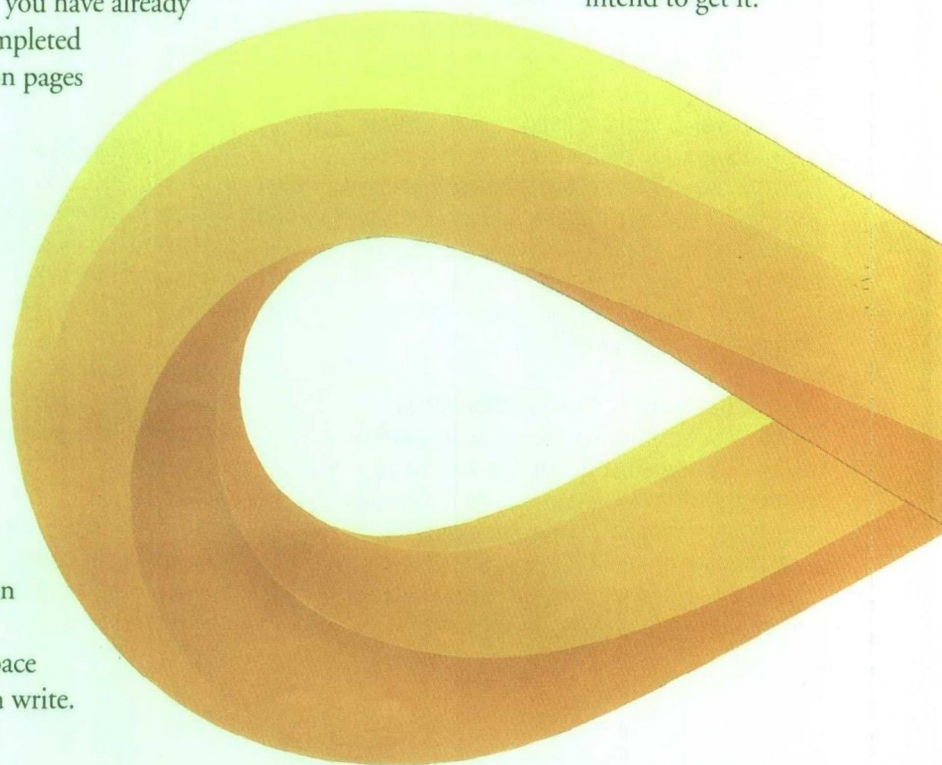
The Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System is a little like flying a plane. Airplanes are seldom exactly on course. Human and automatic pilots are always checking and correcting the heading. The resulting path looks like a zigzag. The plane is almost always flying in the wrong direction, but because of constant observation and course correction, it arrives at the right place.

The same system can be used by students. In fact, you have already used it if you completed Journal Entries on pages 6 and 8. (If you haven't, consider doing one right now.) Journal Entries throughout this book are labeled either "Discovery Statement" or "Intention Statement." Each Journal Entry will contain a short set of directions and space in which you can write.

Through Discovery Statements, you can learn "where you are." They are a record of what you learn about yourself as a student—both strengths and weaknesses. Discovery Statements can also be declarations of what you want, descriptions of your attitudes, statements of your feelings, transcripts of your thoughts, and chronicles of your behavior.

Intention Statements can be used to alter your course. They are statements of your commitment to do a specific task, to take a certain action. An intention arises out of your choice to direct your energy toward a particular goal.

The purpose of this system is not to get you pumped up and excited to go out there and try harder. Discovery and Intention Statements keep you focused on what you want and how you intend to get it.



Journal Entry System

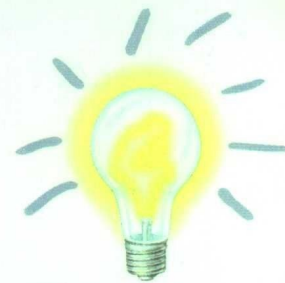
The Journal Entry process is a cycle. You can write Discovery Statements about where you are and where you want to go. Then you can write Intention Statements about the specific steps you will take to get there. Then you can write Discovery Statements about whether you completed those steps and what you learned in the process, followed by more Intention Statements, and so on. Sometimes the statements will be long and detailed. Usually they will be short, maybe just a line or two. Practice it, and the cycle can become automatic.

Don't panic when you fail to complete an intended task. Straying off course is normal. Simply make the necessary corrections. Miraculous progress may not come immediately. Do not be concerned. Stay with the cycle. Use Discovery Statements

to get clear about your world and what you want out of it. Then use Intention Statements to direct your actions. When you notice progress, record it.

The following statement might strike you as radical, but it is true: It often takes the same amount of energy to get what you want in school as it takes to get what you don't want. Sometimes getting what you don't want takes even more effort. An airplane burns the same amount of fuel flying away from its destination as it does flying toward it, so it pays to stay on course.

You can use the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System to stay on your own course and get what you want out of school. Consider the guidelines for Discovery Statements and Intention Statements on pages 12 and 13, then develop your own style. Once you get the hang of it, you might discover you can fly.



PRACTICING CRITICAL THINKING #1

Each chapter in this book includes two exercises designed to help you practice essential skills in critical thinking. Begin this journey in thinking by defacing this book.

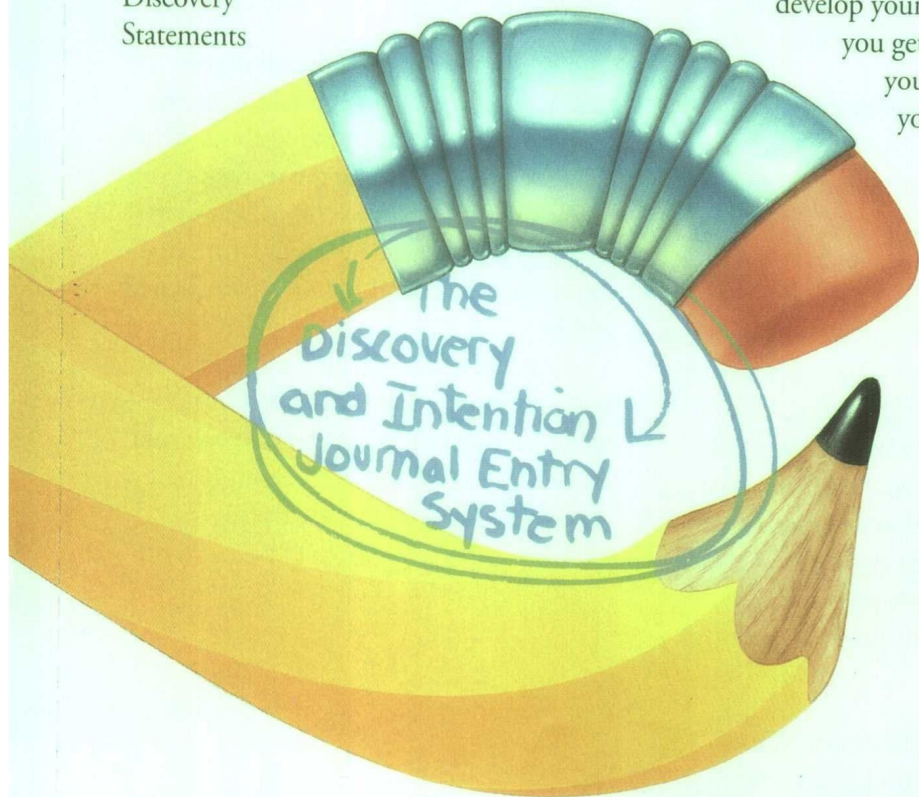
Some books should be preserved in pristine condition. This isn't one of them.

There are valid reasons for not writing in any book. For one thing, it decreases the resale value. However, the benefit of writing in your books outweighs that consideration.

Becoming a Master Student is about learning, and learning is an active pursuit, not a passive one. Something happens when you reach out and touch a book with your pen. When you make notes in the margin, you can hear yourself talking with the author. When you doodle and underline, you can see the author's ideas take shape. You can even argue with an author or create your own ideas.

To complete this exercise, find something you agree with or disagree with on this page and write a short note in the margin about it. Or draw a diagram. Better yet, do both. Let creativity be your guide. Have fun.

Begin defacing now.



HELLO
AUTHOR!
I AGREE.
😊