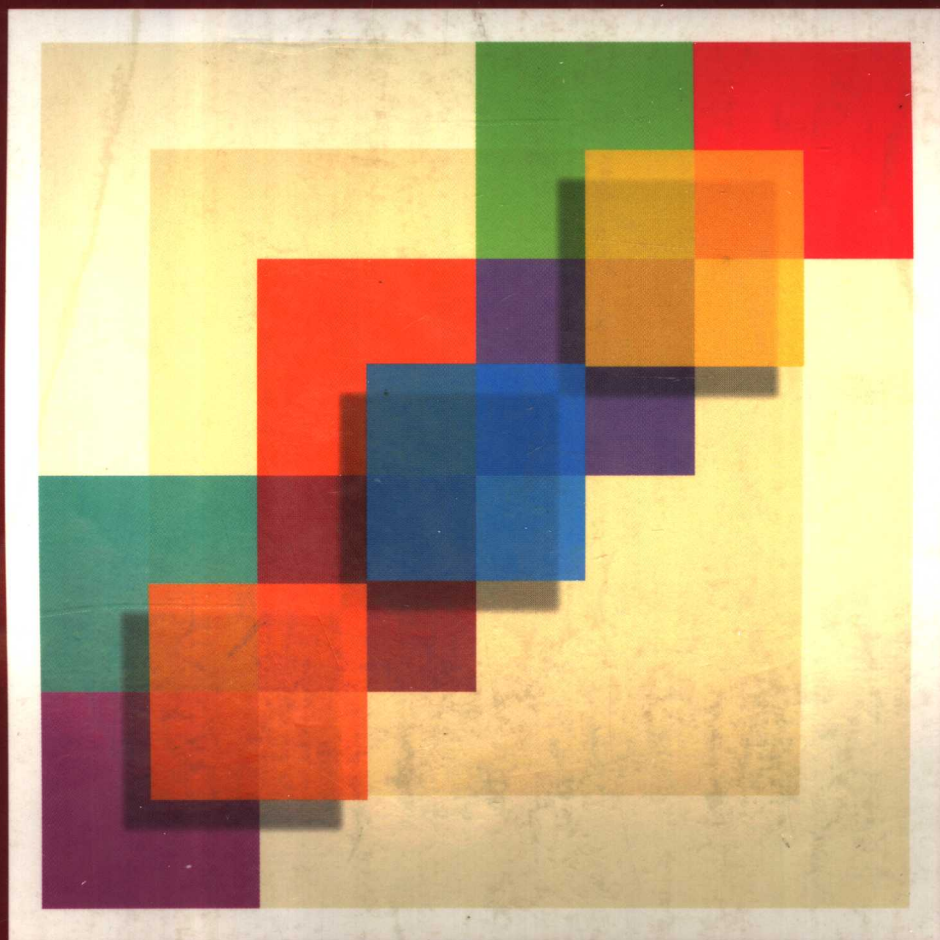


TEN STEPS TO IMPROVING COLLEGE READING SKILLS

THIRD EDITION



JOHN LANGAN

*TEN STEPS TO
IMPROVING
COLLEGE
READING
SKILLS*

THIRD EDITION

JOHN LANGAN

ATLANTIC COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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Preface to the Instructor

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

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

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

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

- Distinguishing between facts and opinions
- Making inferences
- Understanding purpose and tone
- Evaluating arguments

In every chapter in Part I, the key aspects of a skill are explained and illustrated clearly and simply. Explanations are accompanied by a series of practices, and each chapter ends with four review tests. The last review test

consists of a reading selection so that students can apply the skill just learned to real-world reading materials, including newspaper and magazine articles and textbook selections. Together, the ten chapters provide students with the skills needed for basic and more advanced reading comprehension.

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

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

Part III serves a variety of purposes. A personal essay, "Reading for Pleasure and Power," encourages students to become regular readers and suggests practical ways to achieve this goal. Twelve combined-skills passages and tests review the skills in Part I and help students prepare for the standardized reading tests that are often a requirement at the end of a semester. A section on propaganda techniques (one of the ten reading skills in the second edition of the book) offers instruction and practice in a reading skill that some but probably not all instructors will have time to address. There is also a section on logical fallacies that can be covered, depending on student needs and course requirements. Finally, writing assignments for all twenty readings in the text help reinforce reading and thinking skills.

Important Features of the Book

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

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

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

- **Supplementary materials.** The three helpful supplements listed below are available at no charge to instructors using the text. Any or all can be obtained quickly by writing or calling Townsend Press (Pavilions at Greentree—408, Marlton, New Jersey 08053; 1-800-772-6410).
 - 1 An *Instructor's Edition*—chances are that you are holding it in your hand—is identical to the student book except that it also provides hints for teachers (see the front of the book), answers to all the practices and tests, and comments on selected items. (The only answers not provided are for activities immediately explained in the text.)
 - 2 A combined *Instructor's Manual and Test Bank* includes suggestions for teaching the course, a model syllabus, and readability levels. The test bank contains four additional mastery tests for each of the ten skills and four additional combined-skills tests—all on letter-sized sheets so they can be copied easily for use with students.
 - 3 A set of *computer disks* (in IBM and Macintosh formats) provides two additional mastery tests for each of the ten skill chapters in the book. The disks contain a number of user- and instructor-friendly features: brief explanations of answers, a sound option, frequent mention of the user's first name, a running score, and a record-keeping score file.
- **One of a sequence of books.** This is the intermediate text in a series that includes three other books. *Ten Steps to Building College Reading Skills*, Forms A and B, are the basic books in the series, and *Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills* is an advanced text.

The *Building* books are suited for a first college reading course. The two forms of the book allow teachers to easily alternate texts from one semester to the next. The *Improving* book is appropriate for the core developmental reading course offered at most colleges. The *Advancing* book is a slightly higher developmental text than the *Improving* book. It can be used as the core book for a more advanced class, as a sequel to the intermediate book, or as a second-semester alternative to it.

A companion set of vocabulary books, listed on page iv, has been designed to go with the *Ten Steps* books. Recommended to accompany this book is *Improving Vocabulary Skills* or *Improving Vocabulary Skills, Short Version*.

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

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

Changes in the Third Edition

I am grateful for the helpful comments of reviewers as well as the instructors who have either written or spoken to me about the book over the last several years. Based on their suggestions and my own use of the text, I have made some major changes:

- **More emphasis on main ideas.** In response to many requests for added material on main ideas, I have created a new chapter devoted exclusively to implied main ideas and the main idea, or central point, of an entire selection. I have also expanded the original “Main Ideas” chapter.
- **Fresh materials.** Four of the twenty readings in the book are new, as are about 30 percent of the practice materials. In choosing new material, the questions repeatedly asked have been “Is it truly interesting?” and “Does it clearly teach the skill or skills in question?”
- **Major chapter revisions.** The chapter on vocabulary in context, for example, has been enlarged, and all of the mastery tests are new. The treatment of main ideas is spread over two chapters. The chapter on supporting details now includes information on outlining, mapping, and summarizing. The chapters on relationships make it much easier for students to see the connection between transitions and patterns of organization. The chapter on argument has integrated into the text the two most common errors in reasoning (changing the subject and hasty generalization) and moved other logical fallacies to Part III. In general, it will be apparent to past users that changes and improvements appear on almost every page of the text.
- **Integration of transitions with patterns of organization.** The previous edition of the book presented transitions and patterns of organization in separate chapters. The chapters now emphasize relationships and help students understand that just as transitions show the relationships between ideas in sentences, so patterns of organization show the relationships between supporting ideas in paragraphs or longer passages. Specifically, in “Relationships I,” students learn how transitions and patterns of organization show relationships that involve addition and time. In “Relationships II,” students learn how transitions and patterns of organization show relationships that involve examples, comparison or contrast, and cause and effect.
- **Relocation of the mastery tests.** For greater ease of use, the six mastery tests for each skill now immediately follow the chapter on that skill.
- **Additional combined-skills tests.** In this edition, there are twelve short reading passages that gradually progress in difficulty. Each passage is followed by questions that review many of the reading comprehension skills in Part I.

- **New design elements.** To increase readability, a typeface slightly larger than the one in the previous edition has been used for the reading selections, as well as a two-column format.
- **Expanded discussion questions and the addition of writing assignments.** All twenty readings in the book are now followed by discussion questions, and a new section in Part III presents three writing assignments for each selection. Reading and writing are closely connected skills, so practicing one helps the other. By asking students to write about some of the selections, the instructor can improve their ability to read closely and to think carefully.
- **Promotion of the habit of reading.** New to the book is a motivational essay titled “Reading for Pleasure and Power” that details my own experience in becoming a regular reader and suggests practical guidelines for developing the reading habit. Also included as an incentive for students is a free book offer.

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I owe special thanks to two of my colleagues at Townsend Press. Because of Janet Goldstein’s extraordinary design and editing skills, the book enjoys an even more clear and “user-friendly” format than the previous edition. Her work also made possible the creation of the *Instructor’s Edition*, complete with answers and marginal comments, that accompanies the book. I value equally Carole Mohr’s exceptional editorial role. Thanks to her many insights into the nature of each skill and her unfailing sensitivity to the needs of students, the text is significantly better than it would have been otherwise. It has been a special pleasure to work with colleagues who aspire toward excellence. With them, I have been able to create a much better book than I could have managed on my own.

John Langan

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How to Become a Better Reader and Thinker

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here are three final questions to ask yourself:

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

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

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

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

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book is organized into three parts:

Part I: Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills (pages 7–354)

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

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

Each chapter is developed in the same way.

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

- How many practices are there for the second chapter, “Main Ideas” (pages 39–78)? _____

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part II: Ten Reading Selections (pages 355–452)

The ten reading selections that make up Part II are followed by activities that give you practice in all of the skills studied in Part I. Each reading begins in the same way. Look, for example, at “The Yellow Ribbon,” which starts on page 357. What are the headings of the two sections that come before the reading itself?

- _____
- _____

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

- _____

Activities Following Each Reading Selection

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

1 The first activity consists of **basic skill questions**—questions involving vocabulary in context, main ideas (including implied main ideas and the central point), supporting details, and relationships.

- Look at the basic skill questions for “The Yellow Ribbon” on pages 359–360. Note that the questions are labeled so you know what skill you are practicing in each case. How many questions deal with understanding vocabulary in context? _____

2 The second activity is made up of **advanced skill questions**—ones involving fact and opinion, inferences, purpose and tone, and argument.

- Look at the advanced skill questions on pages 361–362. How many questions deal with making inferences? _____

3 The third activity involves **outlining, mapping, or summarizing**. Each of these activities will sharpen your ability to get to the heart of a piece and to think logically and clearly about what you read.

- What kind of activity is provided for “The Yellow Ribbon” on page 363?

- What kind of activity is provided for the reading titled “Urban Legends” on page 372? _____

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

4 The fourth activity consists of **discussion questions**. These questions provide a chance for you to deepen your understanding of each selection.

- How many discussion questions are there for “Urban Legends” (page 373)—and indeed for every other reading? _____

Part III: For Further Study (pages 453–536)

This part of the book contains additional materials that can help improve your reading.

1 The first section, “Reading for Pleasure and Power,” is a personal essay that describes my own experiences in becoming a reader and suggests ways for you to develop the reading habit.

- How many suggestions are provided on pages 459–460? _____
 - What book are you invited to write for? _____
- 2 The second section, “Combined-Skills Tests,” on pages 462–486 is made up of short passages that give you practice in all ten of the skills in the book.
 - How many such tests are there in all? _____
 - 3 The third section, “Propaganda,” discusses techniques that your instructor may choose to cover, depending on the needs of the class.
 - How many kinds of propaganda techniques are explained? _____
 - 4 The fourth section, “More About Argument: Errors in Reasoning,” explains a number of logical fallacies.
 - How many fallacies are treated on pages 511–523? _____
 - 5 The fifth section, “Writing Assignments,” presents writing assignments for all twenty of the reading selections in the book. Reading and writing are closely connected skills, and writing practice will improve your ability to read closely and to think carefully.
 - How many assignments are offered for each reading? _____

HELPFUL FEATURES OF THE BOOK

- 1 The book centers on *what you really need to know* to become a better reader and thinker. It presents ten key comprehension skills and explains the most important points about each one.
- 2 The book gives you *lots of practice*. We seldom learn a skill only by hearing or reading about it; we make it part of us by repeated practice. There are, then, numerous activities in the text. They are not “busywork” but carefully designed materials that should help you truly learn each skill.

Notice that after you learn each skill in Part I, you progress to review tests and mastery tests that enable you to apply the skill. And as you move from one skill to the next, the reading selections help you practice and reinforce the skills already learned.
- 3 The selections throughout the book are *lively and appealing*. Dull and unvaried readings work against learning, so subjects have been carefully chosen for their high interest level. Almost all of the selections here are good examples of how what we read can capture our attention. For instance, begin “The Yellow Ribbon,” which is about a repentant man just released from prison who is wondering if his wife will allow him to return home—and try to stop reading. Or look at the textbook selection on pages 425–427, which considers the question of whether Lizzie Borden really was an ax-murderer.

Or read the textbook selection “Preindustrial Cities,” which, despite its unexciting title, is full of fascinating details about city life before modern food distribution and sanitary facilities.

- 4 The readings include *eight selections from college textbooks*. Therefore, you will be practicing on materials very much like the ones in your other courses. Doing so will increase your chances of transferring what you learn in your reading class to your other college courses.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

- 1 A good way to proceed is to read and review the explanations and examples in a given chapter in Part I until you feel you understand the ideas presented. Then carefully work through the practices. As you finish each one, check your answers with the “Limited Answer Key” that starts on page 537.

For your own sake, *don't just copy in the answers without trying to do the practices!* The only way to learn a skill is to practice it first and then use the answer key to give yourself feedback. Also, take whatever time is needed to figure out just why you got some answers wrong. By using the answer key to help teach yourself the skills, you will prepare yourself for the review and mastery tests at the end of each chapter as well as the other reading tests in the book. Your instructor can supply you with answers to those tests.

If you have trouble catching on to a particular skill, stick with it. In time, you will learn each of the ten skills.

- 2 Read the selections first with the intent of simply enjoying them. There will be time afterward for rereading each selection and using it to develop your comprehension skills.
- 3 Keep track of your progress. Fill in the charts at the end of each chapter in Part I and each reading in Part II. And in the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover, enter your scores for all of the review and mastery tests as well as the reading selections. These scores can give you a good view of your overall performance as you work through the book.

In summary, *Ten Steps to Improving College Reading Skills* has been designed to interest and benefit you as much as possible. Its format is straightforward, its explanations are clear, its readings are appealing, and its many practices will help you learn through doing. *It is a book that has been created to reward effort*, and if you provide that effort, you will make yourself a better reader and a stronger thinker. I wish you success.

John Langan