

*Carol C. Kanar*

**THE  
CONFIDENT  
STUDENT**

**S E C O N D   E D I T I O N**



# THE CONFIDENT STUDENT

SECOND EDITION

Carol C. Kanar

Valencia Community College

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**TO STEVE**

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# PREFACE

*The Confident Student* is informed by my abiding desire to help students gain confidence in their ability to learn and succeed in college. More than twenty years of teaching study skills, reading, and English courses has convinced me that confidence comes from knowledge of oneself as well as through the acquisition of vital skills. Therefore, this book has a dual focus that combines thorough treatment of a wide range of practical, immediately applicable study skills and critical thinking strategies with an equally important emphasis on self-discovery and self-definition to help students meet the challenge of college courses.

Because of this combined emphasis, *The Confident Student* is suitable for study skills courses, orientation courses, and student success courses taught either in traditional classroom settings or in labs or learning centers. The book's wide array of special features and lively, open format makes it especially attractive to those taking these courses. Because many students are visual learners, the instructional material includes a wealth of illustrations, photographs, tables, charts, and other visual aids to engage and sustain their interest.

## Coverage and Organization

After listening to comments and suggestions from instructors who have used the First Edition, I decided to add two new chapters. The new Chapter 12, "Using Critical Thinking Strategies," complements and expands upon principles found in Chapter 13, "Becoming an Active Reader." In fact, recognizing that students don't necessarily understand all they need to consider and the steps they should take in order to think about what they are learning analytically, the Second Edition also reinforces the principles explained in Chapter 12 with "Critical Thinking Application" exercises throughout the text. Chapter 15, "Using the Library, Doing Research," is also new and provides invaluable instruction for students who are faced with research papers and projects, perhaps for the first time.

In the Second Edition, the nineteen chapters have been reorganized to flow more naturally from less difficult topics, cognitively, to the more challenging ones. Also, the part structure has been simplified. What used to be six parts has been consolidated into four. While the organization suggests a possible sequence that can be used, no single order is correct for all

classes. Thus, the parts and chapters have been designed so that students can easily read them out of sequence without any loss in continuity. Throughout the book, discussions of specific skills are carefully cross-referenced to related treatments of those skills in other chapters.

**Part 1: *Becoming a Confident Student*** invites students to assess their academic strengths and weaknesses and discover and learn how to use their learning styles, develop an internal locus of control, set realistic goals, use a problem-solving procedure, and improve listening, notetaking, and oral presentation skills. Also, students enter into a discussion of how they can use their college's resources, not only for academic but also for personal success, and maintain their health and well-being. Students are also introduced to the important principles of time management. Part 1 shows students how to use their time more effectively in order to accomplish their goals, how to make and follow schedules, and how to avoid procrastination.

**Part 2: *Studying with Power and Confidence*** introduces students to a range of study techniques to help them better organize information and make study guides according to their personal learning style preferences. It shows them how to adapt the proven study system, SQ3R, and introduces a new system, PREP, for reading skill-development texts such as those used in math and language courses. This part also focuses on two reading strategies to help students determine what is important in a textbook chapter and how to mark and annotate material. Mapping and outlining strategies for organizing information into study guides are introduced as alternative systems for students to consider. Also, building a strong vocabulary and learning how to improve concentration and memory are thoroughly explored in separate chapters on each of these important skills.

**Part 3: *Learning to Think Critically*** challenges students to think beyond the surface of the issues and content they will encounter in college. At the same time, students learn how to use these critical thinking strategies to help them better process the information they are learning, thus helping them to actually *learn* better. The significant cognitive skills of reading, writing, and researching are explored in the process, building on the perspectives from which *The Confident Student* promotes the concept of active learning.

**Part 4: *Making the Grade*** explains how to prepare for objective, essay, and standardized tests, and how to develop a test-taking routine to follow in a testing situation to ensure optimum performance. A separate chapter on test anxiety contains innovative suggestions for coping with this problem, with special emphasis on relaxation techniques. The last two chapters outline special strategies for meeting the challenges of two disciplines that often pose the greatest difficulty for students: math and science. WHISK, a new method for solving word problems, is a technique students can apply immediately to their math study.

## Special Features

*Awareness Checks* are brief checklists or assessment questionnaires designed to orient students to a chapter or discussion. Sixteen chapters contain at least one Awareness Check; three chapters contain two or more. These Checks help students become aware of what they already know about a topic and their attitude toward it. Answers and explanations follow each Awareness Check. They could become a focus for class activity followed by discussion, or students can use them to prepare for the next day's assignment. The four Checks in Chapter 1 are especially useful in helping students determine their learning style.

*Confidence Builders* in every chapter supplement topic discussions by reporting on current research, introducing another method for solving a common study problem, or examining a related topic. The purpose of Confidence Builders is to interest and motivate students to succeed.

*Computer Confidence* boxes in Chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, 14, and 18 show students how to use personal computers as a study aid to improve time management, organize notes, draft and revise essays, create glossaries of specialized terms, make study guides, and prepare for math tests. The suggestions are simple and easy to follow so that students who have access to a computer either at home or in a lab can use them right away to enhance their study skills.

The pedagogical foundation has been profoundly enhanced with the addition of *Critical Thinking Application* exercises. Each chapter contains at least one such exercise, designed to both prepare students for the concepts presented in Chapter 12, "Using Critical Thinking Strategies," and then to reinforce these principles, applying them to content throughout the text. Students will learn to integrate critical thinking naturally into their approach to studying and classroom interaction, as they continually are asked to question, more fully process, and consider different viewpoints surrounding the issues and concepts being presented.

## Instructional Approach and Learning Tools

The *Skill Finder* on pages xxi–xxiii is an excellent point of entry for this book. It introduces key study skills in checklist form, roughly following the organization of the text. The Skill Finder provides a quick assessment of the student's strengths and weaknesses that will be fleshed out by more detailed questions in the Awareness Checks. It also provides an overview of the text and will reassure students that they can find help for any difficulties they may already be experiencing in their course work. The *Quick Reference Problem Solver* on the inside front cover provides additional problem-solving support and will function as a valuable tool throughout the course and beyond.

*The Confident Student* speaks to readers simply and directly in a friendly, non-intimidating tone. Students will find themselves in these pages among the numerous *examples of typical college students* who experience common difficulties and resolve them by trying out the strategies suggested in the text.

*Exercises* are interspersed with discussions of concepts and strategies throughout each chapter so that students can practice applying new knowledge while it is fresh in their minds. In the Second Edition, many of these exercises have been redesigned to be used as the basis for group work.

The *Instructor's Resource Manual* which accompanies the book is an additional resource for collaborative activities. Candy Ready of Piedmont Technical College has contributed exercises used successfully with her own students, greatly bolstering the emphasis on interactive learning running throughout *The Confident Student*.

*Summaries* near the end of every chapter focus attention on essential information and provide either a quick preview or a review of chapter material. With the Second Edition, students are often exposed to mind maps and other graphic aids overviewing the chapter's main points, further reinforcing the notion that there are a number of study options available. Students need to determine the method through which they will better understand and retain information and then use it.

Finally, *Success Journals* at the end of every chapter provide an opportunity for students to use writing as a learning skill and to engage in introspective thinking about the chapter material. Readers are invited to write a short essay based on their own experiences with these strategies or others that they have found helpful. If they write these entries for each chapter, then, by the end of the term, your students will have a complete record of their progress in the course and another personal reference to use for subsequent courses.

### Ancillaries

The *Instructor's Resource Manual* that accompanies *The Confident Student* contains an answer key for appropriate exercises and chapter-by-chapter suggestions on how to use various elements in the text in a classroom or lab. Also included are sample course syllabi, a brief bibliography, and a set of reproducible masters for overhead transparencies and handouts to supplement information contained in the chapters. Additional collaborative activities are provided in the Second Edition. Candy Ready, Piedmont Technical College, has prepared these exercises in worksheet format, helping ease instructors' use in the classroom.

### Acknowledgments

I want to thank everyone who helped me in writing this text: my husband, Stephen P. Kanar, for providing the encouragement and support I needed to complete this book; my family, friends, and colleagues who also encouraged me.

I am deeply grateful to Alison Husting Zetterquist for her dedication to excellence and for her expertise which guided my efforts. My thanks also go to Melissa Plumb for always being there to answer questions and to offer support, to Nicole Ng for her expert help in getting me through the final stages of this project, and to the entire Houghton Mifflin family of editors and others who contributed to the development and production of *The Confident Student*, Second Edition.

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Finally, I am deeply grateful to my students, for without them I  
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Carol C. Kanar  
June, 1994



# TO THE STUDENT

A new book, like a new semester or quarter, is a new beginning. On the first day of class, everything seems possible. And if you use this book well, starting right now, *The Confident Student* can help you translate your dreams of success into reality, all the way up through graduation and beyond.

## **You and *The Confident Student***

This book was designed to help you discover the ways in which you learn most easily and most enjoyably, and to help you define your own goals and preferences as you embark on your college career. It includes thorough discussions, illustrations, and easy-to-understand suggestions on ways to develop all of the skills you will need to perform well in your classes and build confidence in your own abilities.

Some sections contain so many ideas for strengthening a particular skill that you might feel overwhelmed at first. As you read each discussion, keep in mind that you can try out as many or as few ideas as you like to see whether they work for you. You will develop the best ways for *you* to study as you adapt the ideas in this book to suit your own needs and personal style.

## **How to Use this Book**

To make the most of this book begin with The Skill Finder on pages xxi–xxiii. Use it to get an idea of what the book covers, to discover which of your study skills might need improvement, and to note which parts of the book you might find most useful. When you begin your assignments, read each discussion carefully, take all of the Awareness Checks to construct a complete profile of your skills and interests, follow the suggestions in the Confidence Builders and Computer Confidence boxes to expand your learning horizons, and do the chapter exercises to reinforce your grasp of each skill.

Follow your instructor's syllabus and complete the chapters he or she suggests, but don't be afraid to skip around. For example, if you want to know *right now* how to reduce test anxiety, or how to cope with any other problem that is particularly difficult for you, turn to the Quick Reference Problem Solver printed on the inside front cover. Then identify your chal-

lenge and locate suggestions for addressing it in the text. The Table of Contents and Index contain more detailed entries for these areas, as well as listings for many additional skills covered in *The Confident Student*.

This is a book you will want to keep on your reference shelf when you've finished the course in which you are using it. You can take advantage of all its tools and special features to refresh your knowledge of important skills as you face new challenges in more advanced courses. You may find it helpful to re-read the chapter summaries for a quick but comprehensive review.

### **Make it a Better Book**

When you've completed your course, I'd really like to know your opinion of *The Confident Student, Second Edition*. Tell me what works and what doesn't work for you; suggest ways that I could make improvements. Write to me at the following address:

Carol C. Kanar  
c/o Houghton Mifflin Student Success Programs  
215 Park Avenue South  
New York, NY 10003

# SKILL FINDER

This questionnaire is designed to give you an overview of *The Confident Student* and an opportunity to determine which study skills you need to develop or improve. Read each statement. If the statement applies to you, check YES. If the statement does not apply to you, check NO. See the end of the questionnaire for instructions about how to interpret your results.

Yes No

☐ ☐

1. I usually have a goal I am trying to reach.

☐ ☐

2. I have no trouble making decisions about which courses I should take.

☐ ☐

3. I know what courses are required at my college.

☐ ☐

4. I have a college catalog, and I check it often to keep up with important dates and deadlines.

## Setting Goals and Using Resources

## Listening and Note Taking

☐ ☐

5. When I am listening to a lecture, I do not become distracted.

☐ ☐

6. I know the words to listen for in a lecture that will tell me what is important.

☐ ☐

7. I usually take notes during class.

☐ ☐

8. When I take notes, I am able to keep up with the lecturer.

## Time Management

☐ ☐

9. I know how to manage my time.

☐ ☐

10. I almost always arrive on time for classes.

☐ ☐

11. Only sickness or emergency prevents me from coming to class.

☐ ☐

12. When I have a lot of studying to do, I have no trouble getting started.

Yes No

## Memory and Concentration

☐ ☐

**13.** I can usually remember what I've studied well enough to get good grades on tests.

☐ ☐

**14.** I associate new material to be learned with what I already know.

☐ ☐

**15.** I have a certain place where I do most of my studying.

☐ ☐

**16.** I am not easily distracted when there is something I need to study.

☐ ☐

**17.** I do not hesitate to ask questions in class.

## Using Textbooks Effectively

☐ ☐

**18.** Before I read a chapter, I look it over briefly to see what it is going to be about.

☐ ☐

**19.** I am able to follow the writer's ideas in a textbook chapter.

☐ ☐

**20.** I am able to maintain my interest in what I read.

☐ ☐

**21.** I read chapter headings and turn them into questions I can answer as I read.

☐ ☐

**22.** I always take a few minutes to examine the tables and other visual aids in chapters I read.

☐ ☐

**23.** I use mapping techniques to organize information.

☐ ☐

**24.** I almost always underline or highlight my textbooks.

☐ ☐

**25.** I make notes from my textbooks to help me study.

☐ ☐

**26.** I review my notes before and after class.

☐ ☐

**27.** I keep a list of special terms and definitions of words I need to learn for my courses.

## Critical Thinking

☐ ☐

**28.** Before I attempt to learn anything new, I examine my assumptions about it.

☐ ☐

**29.** When I am listening to a lecture, I can usually predict what the lecturer will say next.

☐ ☐

**30.** I am good at interpreting, or making sense of, what I learn.

☐ ☐

**31.** I am able to evaluate information for its usefulness.

## Reading and Writing

☐ ☐

**32.** I know what it means to be an "active" reader.

☐ ☐

**33.** I am able to understand and remember most of what I read.

☐ ☐

**34.** I know how to plan and write an essay.

☐ ☐

**35.** I can usually find and correct my errors.

## Research and Library Skills

Yes No

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. I know what resources my college library contains.
37. I know how to use computerized information retrieval systems.
38. If I were given a research assignment today, I would know how to find the information I need to complete it.
39. If my instructor were to assign a research paper, I would have no trouble getting started.

## Preparing for and Taking Tests

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

40. I usually know what to study for tests.
41. I am almost always prepared for tests.
42. Taking a test does not make me nervous if I am prepared.
43. If I don't know the answer to a multiple-choice question, I use guessing strategies.
44. I do not usually run out of time when I am taking a test.
45. It doesn't bother me if someone finishes a test before I do.

## Studying Math and Science

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

46. I do all math problems at the ends of chapters whether they are assigned or not.
47. In a math course, I usually know why I make the errors I make on tests.
48. I believe I am capable of doing well in math.
49. I know how to prepare for my science class.
50. Remembering information from science textbooks is easy for me.

Count the number of "no" answers for each section. If you have more than one per section, you may want to improve or develop the study skill or skills identified by the section heading. Use the list below to locate the part in *The Confident Student* that covers these skills; see the Table of Contents or Index if you want to locate a specific topic or discussion. Your instructor may ask you to answer these questions again at the end of your course to see what skills you have mastered.

SKILL FINDER	CORRESPONDING PART IN <i>THE CONFIDENT STUDENT</i> , 2ND EDITION
Questions 1–12	Part One
Questions 13–27	Part Two
Questions 28–39	Part Three
Questions 40–50	Part Four



# CONTENTS

*Preface* xiii  
*To the Student* xix  
*Skill Finder* xxi

---

## *Part One* **BECOMING A CONFIDENT STUDENT 1**

---



### **MOTIVATING YOURSELF TO LEARN 3**

**Assess Your Academic Strengths and Weaknesses 3**

- **AWARENESS CHECK #1** What Are Your Academic Strengths and Weaknesses 5
- **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** Your Kind of Intelligence 6

**Discover and Use Your Learning Style 7**

- Your Five Senses 8
- **AWARENESS CHECK #2** What Are Your Sensory Preferences? 9
- Your Body's Reactions 10
- **AWARENESS CHECK #3** How Does Your Body React? 11
- Your Preferred Learning Environment 12
- Your Level of Motivation 15
- **AWARENESS CHECK #4** What Is Your Locus of Control? 16

**Develop Critical Thinking and Study Skills 18**

**Adapt to Your Instructors' Teaching Styles 19**

- **CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION** 21

**Summary 22**

- **YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL** 24



### **SETTING GOALS AND SOLVING PROBLEMS 25**

**Set Goals for Success in College 26**

- **AWARENESS CHECK #5** What Are Your Reasons for Attending College? 26

**Set Reachable Long-Term and Short-Term Goals 28**

## **Use the COPE Method to Solve Problems 31**

One Student's Challenge 32

The COPE Method 34

■ **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** How to Develop a Positive Attitude 39

■ **CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION** 40

Summary 41

■ **YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL** 24

# **3**

## **SHARPENING YOUR CLASSROOM SKILLS 45**

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #6** How Are Your Classroom Skills? 46

Prepare for Class 46

Become an Active Listener 47

■ **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** Sharpening Your Listening Skills 51

Develop a Personal Note-Taking System 52

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #7** How Are Your Note-Taking Skills? 52

Guidelines for Note-Taking 53

The Informal Outline/Key Words System 54

The Cornell Method 56

■ **COMPUTER CONFIDENCE** Use a Computer to Organize Your Notes 59

Matching Note-Taking and Learning Style 60

Learn to Make Effective Oral Presentations 61

Participate in Class and Group Activities 63

■ **CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION** 65

Summary 65

■ **YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL** 67

# **4**

## **MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME 68**

How to GRAB Some Time 68

Goal 69

Responsibilities 69

Analysis 69

Balance 70

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #8** Where Does Your Time Go? 71

Scheduling Your Time 72

The Semester or Quarter Calendar 72

Your Weekly Schedule 74

A Daily List 79

Special Challenges for Commuters 80

Time Management and Learning Style 81

Procrastination 82

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #9** Are You a Procrastinator? 82

Four Reasons for Procrastination 82

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #10** What Is Your Attitude Toward Studying? 84

■ **COMPUTER CONFIDENCE** Use the Computer to Save Time 85

How to Beat Procrastination 86

■ **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** Finding Time When There Is None 87

**Your Study Place 87**

■ **CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION** 89

**Summary 90**

■ **YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL** 91



## **ADAPTING TO COLLEGE LIFE 92**

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #11** Do You Know Your Campus Culture and Its Resources? 93

**Your Diverse Campus 93**

Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Minorities 94

Adult Learners 94

Learning Disabled and Physically Disabled 95

Non-Native Speakers of English 95

**Using Your College's Resources 96**

**People Who Can Help 96**

Faculty 96

Advisors and Counselors 96

More Helpful People 97

■ **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** Mentors Help Students Succeed 100

**Places to Go for Help 101**

**Publications That Help 104**

The College Catalog 105

More Publications 106

**Commuter Involvement in Campus Culture 108**

■ **CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION** 108

**Summary 109**

■ **YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL** 111



## **MAINTAINING YOUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 112**

■ **AWARENESS CHECK #12** Are You leading a Balanced Life? 113

**Health, Well-Being, and Success in College 114**

**Staying Healthy 116**

Eating Sensibly 116

Improving Fitness 119

■ **CONFIDENCE BUILDER** A Word About Coffee 120

Managing Stress	122
Avoiding Harmful Substances	125
<b>Your Emotions</b>	<b>126</b>
Understanding Your Feelings	126
Leading a Purposeful Life	127
<b>Accepting the Need for Change</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Your Interpersonal Skills</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Sex and the College Student</b>	<b>132</b>
Practicing Safe Sex	132
Understanding Date Rape	133
Dealing With Sexual Harassment	134
Avoiding Unwanted Pregnancy	135
<b>Making Friends</b>	<b>136</b>
■ CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION	138
<b>Summary</b>	<b>138</b>
■ YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL	140

---

## *Part Two* **STUDYING WITH POWER AND CONFIDENCE 141**

---

### **7**

#### **CREATING YOUR STUDY SYSTEM 143**

- AWARENESS CHECK #13 Are You Using Your Textbooks Effectively? 144

#### **Reading Isn't Enough 145**

#### **SQ3R The Basic System 145**

- Survey 145
- Question 155
- Read 157
- Recite 157

#### **Review 157**

#### **Devising Your Study System 158**

- For Mathematics Courses 158
- For Science Courses 158
- For Literature Courses 158
- For Foreign Language Courses 159
- For Social Science Courses 159

- CONFIDENCE BUILDER The PREP Study System 161
- CRITICAL THINKING APPLICATION 162

#### **Summary 163**

- YOUR SUCCESS JOURNAL 165

### **8**

#### **ORGANIZING INFORMATION AND MAKING STUDY GUIDES 166**