

Fourth Edition

# on course

*Strategies for Creating Success  
in College and in Life*



# Skip Downing

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# ON COURSE





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Fourth Edition

## Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life

**Skip Downing**

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# Preface

**O**n *Course* is intended for college students of any age who want to create success both in college and in life. College may be unfamiliar now, but grab your compass (this text, *On Course*), your book bag, and your dreams, and start discovering yourself. Step onto the road to success and begin moving in the right direction. The right direction is certainly a very personal choice, but working through *On Course* can help you determine the choices you must make to succeed. While goals are very personal, there are common strategies for reaching goals that can be used successfully by most people.

## Intended Outcomes of *On Course*

Whether you are taking a student success or a freshman seminar course, a composition course, or an “inward-looking” course of psychology, self-exploration, or personal growth, *On Course* will present you with practical and proven strategies for improving study skills. The essential study skills—reading, taking notes, studying, memorizing, taking tests, writing, and researching—are covered in the **Wise Choices in College** sections. You’ll also learn about college customs, effective money management, and using computer technology to boost your success. However, that’s just the beginning. Through articles, guided journals, case studies in critical thinking, and inventories, *On Course* shows you how to make wise choices that will empower you to experience greater self-awareness, self-management, creative and critical thinking skills, emotional intelligence, and lifelong learning skills.

## New and Proven Features of the Fourth Edition

- **New to this edition are Technology Exercises found in the Wise Choices sections of each chapter.** These exercises guide you as you practice methods for using computer technology and the Internet for greater success.
- **Wise Choices in College.** This feature can help you learn the essential study skills necessary to succeed in college—reading, note taking, studying, memorizing, test taking, writing, and researching. *New to this edition* is a section on making wise choices with money found in Chapter 4. “Effective Money Management” will give you strategies on financial planning, including budgeting and finding ways to decrease your expenses and increase your income.

- **New Section on Stress Management.** The section dealing with stress management in Chapter 8 has been changed from “Reducing Distress” to “Reducing Stress.” The expanded coverage will help you understand the nature of stress, be aware of the consequences, and learn strategies for overcoming these forms of stress.
- **Personal Assessment Questionnaires.** *On Course* begins and ends with a personal assessment questionnaire. By completing the initial questionnaire, you see areas of growth that need attention. By completing the concluding questionnaire, you see your semester’s growth. You have the option of completing the questionnaire either in the text or online on the Houghton Mifflin College Survival Programs web site at the *On Course* location. The online version gives you an immediate print out of your scores, and, for comparison, the average scores of everyone else who has taken it. To access the self-assessment online, go to the *On Course* web site at <http://collegesurvival.college.hmco.com/students>. Select *On Course* from the list of titles.
- **Articles on Success Strategies.** Thirty-one brief articles explain proven strategies for creating success in college and in life. Each article presents a strategy based upon the ideas of respected figures in psychology, philosophy, business, sports, politics, and personal and professional growth.
- **Focus Questions.** Preceding each article, focus questions encourage you to read to find personally valuable answers. By formulating questions before reading and seeking answers while reading, you improve your reading skills.
- **Guided Journal Entries.** A guided journal entry immediately follows each article, giving you an opportunity to apply the success strategy to enhance your outcomes and experiences in college and in life. *Believing in Yourself* journal activities appear in each chapter, reinforcing the importance of personal self-worth for long-term success.
- **Case Studies for Critical Thinking.** Apply the strategies you learn to a real-life problem. The case studies, on topics like procrastination and collaborative work, spark lively discussions that assist you in seeing the importance and challenges of making wise choices. Because case studies don’t have a “right” answer, they also encourage you to think critically and creatively.
- **On Course Principles at Work.** These sections show how important the *On Course* success strategies are for choosing the right career, getting hired, and succeeding in the work world.
- **Quotations.** Marginal quotations express the wisdom of famous and not-so-famous people regarding the success strategies under consideration in articles throughout the text.
- **Poems and Cartoons.** Poems and cartoons throughout the book are thematically linked with the success strategies being explored.



## Support for the Student and Instructor

We help you build community in a number of ways:

**1. New! Houghton Mifflin Class Prep CD-ROM** provides an electronic support to accompany the *Facilitator's Manual* for *On Course*. Available for both Windows and Macintosh platforms, the CD-ROM provides sample syllabi, journal topics, additional exercises, quizzes, and more helpful tips and strategies for using *On Course* in your course. Also included on the CD-ROM are **PowerPoint** presentations created by the author to accompany *On Course*.

**2. Facilitator's Manual.** The facilitator's manual offers educators specific suggestions for using *On Course* in various kinds of courses and endeavors to answer questions that educators might have about using the text. It also includes numerous in-class exercises that encourage active exploration of the success strategies presented in the text. These exercises include role playing, learning games, dialogues, demonstrations, metaphors, mind-mappings, brainstorming, questionnaires, drawings, skits, scavenger hunts, and many others.

**3. College Survival Programs Web Site** (<http://collegesurvival.college.hmco.com>). This web site offers you new ways to interact with your peers, with us, and with yourself! Try the online exercise in time management, the discussion groups, and the *On Course* personal assessment questionnaire from the text. Enjoy information, activities, and links to helpful resources. The *On Course* web site is located at <http://collegesurvival.college.hmco.com/students>. Select *On Course* from the list of titles.

**4. The HM Assessment and Portfolio Builder CD-ROM** is a personal assessment tool to assist students in preparing for the workplace. Students will build their portfolio by responding to questions in the modules Personal, Interpersonal, Career, and Community, and by reflecting on their skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors. The Accomplishments Report will summarize the results of their responses, perfect for creating a résumé or preparing for interviews. Equipped with their accomplishments report, students are invited to explore Houghton Mifflin's web-based **Career Resource Center** for more tips, exercises, articles, and ideas to help them succeed on their journey from college to career. The Bridge from College to Career lets students practice new skills in college that can be applied as they enter the job market. Finding the Perfect Job helps students fine-tune their résumé writing and interviewing skills. And Skills for Your Future provides strategies in problem solving and decision making to help students learn how to work with others and communicate on the job. ISBN 0-618-23283-4

**5. The Interviewing Process: Strategies for Making the Right Impression:** Taking students through the interviewing process from start to finish, this video provides strategies to be successful in a job search, both now and in future career exploration. Combining advice from Career Counselor Susan Loffredo with simulated interviewing scenarios conducted by actual professionals and managers, this video is packed with jewels of

information students can use in preparing for their own interview, while providing a fly-on-the-wall view of the process itself. ISBN 0-618-37982-7

**6. Money and Finances Video:** “Money and Finances” discusses strategies for students to use to help them gain control of their finances and overcome the money problems they may currently have. Students will hear advice from financial advisor Ann Egan on income and expenses, and examine the general principles of budgeting and cash flow. Teach your students to develop the skills of good money management, including the pitfalls of credit card spending and a discussion of financial aid. *Running Time:* approx. 30 min. ISBN 0-618-38255-0

**7. “Roundtable Discussions” Videotapes.** These two videotapes, “Study Strategies” and “Life Skills,” feature five college students who discuss and seek solutions to the problems they face in college and in life. Call 1-800-733-1717, visit the Student Success Programs web site, or contact your Houghton Mifflin representative for more information. A teaching unit for the videotapes is also available on the Student Success Programs web site.

**8. Houghton Mifflin Success Planner** is a week-at-a-glance academic planner available in a specially priced package with this text. Produced in partnership with Premier, the Success Planner assists you in managing time both on and off campus. The planner includes a “Survival Kit” of helpful success tips from Houghton Mifflin Company College Survival textbooks.

**9. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) Instrument\*.** This is the most widely used personality inventory in history—shrink wrapped with *On Course* for a discounted price at qualified schools. The standard form M self-scorable instrument contains 93 items that determine preferences on four scales: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving.

**10. Retention Management System™ College Student Inventory.** The Noel Levitz College Student Inventory instrument is available in a specially priced package with this text. This early-alert, early-intervention program identifies students with tendencies that contribute to dropping out of school. Students can participate in an integrated, campus-wide program. Advisors are sent three interpretative reports: The Student’s Report, the Advisor/Counselor Report, and The College Summary and Planning Report. For more information, contact your College Survival consultant at 1-800-528-8323 or your local Houghton Mifflin Sales Representative.

**11. College Survival Consulting Services:** College Survival is the leading source of expertise, support services, and materials for student suc-

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cess courses. We are committed to promoting and supporting effective success courses within the higher education community.

For more than fifteen years, Houghton Mifflin's College Survival consultants have provided consultation and training for the design, implementation, and presentation of student success and first-year courses. Our team of consultants has a wide variety of experience in teaching and administering the first-year course. They can provide help in establishing or improving your student success program. We offer assistance in course design, instructor training, teaching strategies, and much more. Contact us today at 1-800-528-8323, or visit us on the web at [college.hmco.com](http://college.hmco.com).

**12. Instructor Trainings:** The author conducts faculty development workshops for all educators who want to learn strategies for assisting students to be successful both in college and in life. Graduate Credits and CEUS are available for the 4-day *On Course* workshops. For information, contact the author toll-free at 1-888-597-6451, or go to the author's web site at <http://www.oncourseworkshop.com>.

**13. On Course Newsletter.** All college educators are invited to subscribe to the free *On Course* Newsletter. Thousands of subscribers world-wide receive weekly e-mails (bi-weekly in the summer) with innovative, learner-centered strategies for empowering students to achieve greater success. To subscribe, simply go to [www.OnCourseWorkshop.com](http://www.OnCourseWorkshop.com) and follow the easy one-click directions.

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S. D.

## Travel with Me

*On Course* is the result of my own quest to live a rich, personally fulfilling life and my strong desire to pass on what I've learned to my students. As such, *On Course* is a very personal book, for me and for you. I invite you to explore in depth what success means to you. I suggest that if you want to achieve your greatest potential in college and in life, you will want to transform many of your beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. In short, you will want to learn to make wiser choices.

During my first two decades of teaching college courses, I consistently observed a sad and perplexing puzzle. Each semester I watched students sort themselves into two groups. One group achieved varying degrees of academic success, from excelling to just squeaking by. Another group struggled: withdrawing, disappearing, or failing. But, here's the puzzling part. The struggling students often displayed as much academic potential as their more successful classmates, and in some cases more. What, I wondered, caused the vastly different outcomes of these two groups? And what could I do to help my struggling students achieve greater success?

Somewhere around my twentieth year of teaching, I experienced a series of crises in both my personal and professional life. In a word, I was struggling. After a period of feeling sorry for myself, I embarked on a quest to improve the quality of my life. I read, I took seminars and workshops, I talked with wise friends and acquaintances, I kept an in-depth journal, I saw a counselor, I even returned to graduate school for a master's degree in applied psychology. I was seriously motivated to change my life for the better.

If I were to condense all that I learned into one sentence, it would be this: **Successful, happy people consistently make wiser choices than do struggling, unhappy people.** I came to see that the quality of my life was essentially the result of all of my previous choices. I saw how the wisdom (or lack of wisdom) of my choices influenced every aspect of my life. The same, of course, was true of my struggling students.

For nearly two decades, I have continued my quest to identify the specific choices that lead to success both in college and in life. As a result of what I learned (and continue to learn), I created a course at Baltimore City Community College called the College Success Seminar. This course teaches students how to make the essential choices that empower us all to achieve more of what we want in life. Later, I created two graduate courses that teach college educators how to empower their own students to be more successful in college and in life. Teaching these courses and writing *On Course* appeals to a deep place in me because they have the power to change people's lives for the better. But that's not the only appeal. These activities also help *me* stay



conscious of the wise choices I must consistently make to live a richer, more personally fulfilling life.

Now that much of my life is back on course, I don't want to forget how I got here!

## Skip Downing

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