

College Reading and Study Skills

Third Edition

Nancy V. Wood



College Reading and Study Skills

A Guide to Improving Academic Communication

THIRD EDITION

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Preface to the Third Edition

The purpose of this edition, as of the first and second, is to provide students with the skills necessary for success in college classes. Especially emphasized are the basic communication skills as they are used in an academic setting. There are chapters to help students learn to *read* textbooks and library materials, to *listen* to lectures, to *write* papers and examinations, and to *speak* in class discussions and give oral reports. When students can do a good job of communicating, they possess the skills most essential for academic success.

The material in this book follows the sequence of tasks that students are expected to perform when they enroll in college. This sequence remains the same as that of the second edition. In Part 1 of the book, students are encouraged to consider their reasons for coming to college and to decide how to organize and approach their studies. They are also taught ways to improve their concentration and motivation, subjects of major concern to most students.

In Parts 2 and 3, they are taught how to learn during class time and how to read their textbooks. Part 4 teaches students to take examinations successfully, and Part 5 teaches students a process for doing written assignments. Part 6 summarizes the skills taught in the book and invites students to make a final evaluation of their own skills via a checklist of study techniques.

Numerous examples, many newly selected for this edition, are used to illustrate procedures and theory: Examples of lecture notes illustrate note-taking skills; passages from current textbooks serve to develop reading skills; sample notes and written passages illustrate the various stages of writing

papers; and study sheets and exam answers, written by students, demonstrate how to study for and take exams. Practice exercises appear at the end of each chapter. These exercises take several forms: checklists that invite self-evaluation, objective questions to ensure that students comprehend the essential points, suggested activities that require application of the new skills in the students' other classes, new topics for Learning Journals that encourage reflective self-assessment and further application of skills, and a new campus resources sheet to encourage students to seek outside help. New and varied "Application of Skills" exercises have been added to every chapter in an attempt to encourage students even more persuasively than in past editions to use what they have learned.

The first edition of this book, before it was published, was classroom tested with two groups of students. The first was a group of early-admission students, and the second was the group of provisionally admitted students referred to in *To the Student*. Both groups read the preliminary text and responded to a questionnaire. Specifically, they were asked to identify difficult vocabulary, confusing passages, and chapters that were too difficult or too long, and to evaluate the exercises at the end of each chapter. These students' readings of the manuscript resulted in some significant changes. If enough students indicated they would not follow a particular suggestion, it was eliminated. Exercises were included only when there was nearly unanimous agreement that they were worth doing. Chapters identified as too difficult were simplified, and chapters identified as too long were shortened. The resulting chapters can be read by most students, with ease, in less than thirty minutes.

Since publication of the first edition, I have continued to test the theory and exercises in this book with at least a thousand additional students each year at this university. A team of colleagues who taught the course in which this book was used have met with me weekly during the past eight years to discuss and experiment with better ways of teaching these materials. Our students have also evaluated this book each semester. The new ideas and exercises that emerged from our weekly planning sessions and from student questionnaires were then tested in our classrooms. Those that worked best are included in this third edition. Other ideas that emerged from these meetings and this teaching are now included in the *Instructor's Manual*. Included in it are answer keys to the exercises in the text, class designs, examinations and answers, ideas for additional class activities, materials, and exercises, and a final evaluation instrument. To obtain a complimentary copy of the *Instructor's Manual*, write to the English Editor, College Department, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

The ten reading labs appear once again in the Appendix. Their purpose is to extend students' ranges of reading speed, to encourage students to develop the habit of selecting and reading books for pleasure, and to teach students how to skim when special situations call for this skill. These labs can be done consecutively in ten days, or they can be spread out over a semester. Each lab takes thirty to forty-five minutes to complete, is self-instructional, and can be done in class. Experience with the students who tested these materials shows,

however, that these labs are also effective when assigned as outside work. The students time themselves and write summaries of the material they have read to be evaluated later either by the instructor or by another student. An advantage of students evaluating each other's summaries is that they become familiar with more than one book, their own and their classmate's.

Besides the changes already mentioned, this third edition includes other additions and changes: (1) The number of chapters has been reduced from twenty to sixteen to make the book easier to use in short courses and terms as well as in semesters; (2) Boxed minimal study skills have been added to Chapters 1–15 to emphasize what students should do “at the very least” if they cannot always use all of the skills taught; (3) New material, which reflects current research in learning, has been added in the areas of personal learning styles, time management, class discussion techniques, thinking and reasoning skills, and management of the testing environment, particularly by using positive self-talk and learning to handle distractions; (4) Part 3, *Reading the Textbook*, contains a new chapter on surveying that emphasizes perceiving organization and chunking material, and a new chapter entitled “Reading the Chapter” that places relatively less emphasis on reading paragraphs and more on reading longer sections of material; (5) Part 4, *Taking Exams*, includes new examples of types of exam questions and new ways to help students prepare for them. Also added is a new section on how to take essay exams; (6) Part 5, *Writing the Paper*, has a new chapter on writing college papers that emphasizes process, purpose, prewriting activities, and rewriting and revision. Also new are the latest recommendations for doing in-text citations. The chapter on the library includes new information on using computer indexes and doing computer searches. (7) Part 6, *Summary*, places new emphasis on the skills and attitudes needed for success both in college and in the workplace. A Likert scale has been added to the checklist of study techniques to provide new opportunities to study and evaluate students' use of the skills taught. Finally, (8) the reading list in the Appendix has been extended and brought up to date. Its purpose is not only to provide suggested books for reading-lab practice, but also to encourage students to do more leisure reading.

In preparing the manuscript for this third edition, I have had valuable help from the tutors and the instructors who make up the staff of the Study Skills and Tutorial Services department at the University of Texas at El Paso. I would like to thank them and the students we teach. Both groups have contributed much to this edition. In particular I would like to thank Evelyn Posey, Maryann Burlingham, Sandra Sweeney, and Gladys Shaw for devising some new and creative exercises for this edition. I am also grateful to Ruth Pepin, Suzanne Stearns, Anita Hanke, Susan Fowler, Melissa Wiseman, Lisa Peticolas, and Jean Patterson for their contributions, their patience, and their care in testing the new ideas and exercises for this edition in their classes. James A. Wood has helped me generate and develop many ideas for all editions of this book. Helen Bell helped update the material on doing library research. Exam questions in Chapter 12 were drawn from actual examinations given by the faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso. Melissa Spresser has been exceptionally capable

and supportive in helping with the preparation of the final manuscript. I also want to thank those who have read and commented on the manuscript: Greg Alexander, Portland Community College; James L. Brother, Hartford State Technical College; Gladdys W. Church, SUNY at Brockport; John H. Corcoran, Glassboro State College; Timothy E. Dykstra, Franklin University; LeAnne Higgs, Franklin University; Harold N. Hild, Northeastern Illinois University; Vance Rhoades, Brewton-Parker College; Norma V. Spalding, San Jose State University; Carlene Walker, University of Texas at El Paso. I also wish to thank the following reviewers for this edition: Colleen Fairbanks, University of Michigan; John Howe, Community College of Philadelphia; Linda Knight, York Technical College; Becky Patterson, Anchorage Community College; W. Donald Smith, Lane Community College; Rory Stephens, Northeastern Illinois University. When they see that I have followed much of their advice, they will realize how much I have valued their comments.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Holt staff: Charlotte Smith, Charlyce Jones Owen, Lester A. Sheinis, Annette Mayeski, and Gloria Gentile. These individuals have provided me with the editorial guidance, encouragement, and professional expertise that was indispensable for completing this project.

N.V.W.
El Paso, Texas

To the Student

When you pick up a study skills textbook, you have the right to ask two questions. The first is, "Are there really study skills I can learn that will make me more successful in college?" The second is, "Will this book help me learn these skills?"

In the first edition of this book, to answer these questions, I told about a group of freshman students who had not met ordinary admissions requirements at the University of Texas at El Paso. They were admitted with the provision that they make C's or better their first semester or they would have to drop out. Some of these students took the study skills course I was teaching and used this book. This group of students learned and practiced the material in this book for one semester. More than three-fourths of them made the grades required for regular academic status. Less than one-fourth of the other provisionally admitted students, who had no study skills training, were able to achieve the same status.

Since that time I have tested the material in this book with at least 7,000 additional students, 5,000 of whom were provisionally admitted. Nearly all of the provisional students who made the grades to continue at the university also completed the course in which this book was used as the textbook.

All of these students were successful because they learned and used certain skills that the other students did not have. These skills often make the difference between staying in school successfully or getting poor grades and becoming discouraged.

To do well in college you will need to learn to concentrate, listen, read

and write well, join in class discussion, adapt to different types of classes and professors, and make efficient use of your time. This book will provide you with the information and practice exercises to help you learn these skills.

You will have to use what is in this book rather than just read it, if it is to work for you. The students who gave this text its trial run were willing to use it, apply it, and experiment with it in all of their classes. Some students went even further—they changed and adapted some of the skills to meet their own individual preferences or particular needs in other courses they were taking. The information in this book will help you, too, if you use it as these students did.

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PART ONE

Getting Started

1

Improving Your Concentration and Motivation

When you have finished reading this chapter, you will know the following:

1. How to concentrate on reading this and other textbooks.
2. How to maintain a high level of motivation.
3. How to deal with problems that can interfere with concentration.
4. How effective study skills can improve concentration.

The Link between Concentration and Motivation

Concentration and motivation are closely related. Good concentration results from keeping your mind on what you are doing, keeping a high level of interest, and ignoring all distractions. Good motivation results from having clear reasons for being in college and having a strong desire to learn and do your best.

Strong motivation will help you concentrate and good concentration will help you stay motivated. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest ways to

improve both your concentration and motivation so that you will achieve the greatest possible success in college.

Improve Your Concentration as You Read

Even though you have read only a few lines so far in this chapter, your mind may already be starting to wander. Here is a system for reading, then, that will help you immediately to concentrate. (Find more details on this system in Chapter 9.)

1. Underline the words and phrases in a paragraph that state the central thought.
2. Jot the main idea of the paragraph in the margin.
3. At the end of each section, in your own words, write a brief summary of the main points.

The following section of material has been marked for you. Study it as an example, and then continue to mark this book, and your other textbooks, in this way. You will find that you have to concentrate to jot down main ideas and summary points.

Motivation, a Key to Concentration

It is easier to keep a high level of concentration when you want to do the work you have set for yourself. The following suggestions will help you stay motivated.

1. Have a reason for going to college and keep that reason in mind Figure 1.1 summarizes the responses that 572 freshman students recently gave in response to a questionnaire asking them to check off their reasons for being in college. As you read through the list, check your own reasons for coming.

Most students checked three or four different reasons. Look at what you checked. Do you agree with the majority? The reasons checked most frequently were "because I want to become an educated person" and "because I want to prepare myself for a specific job or profession." You need to remember your own good reasons for coming to college in order to stay motivated.

stay motivated

① Have reason for college

<i>I Am Going to College . . .</i>	<i>% of 572 Students Polled</i>	<i>Which Ones Would You Check?</i>
a. because I don't want to get a job right now.	4%	_____
b. because I'm afraid I won't be able to get a job without a college education.	41%	_____
c. because I want to prepare myself for a specific job or profession.	97%	_____
d. because my parents want me to and I want to please them.	19%	_____
e. because I want to find a husband/wife.	2%	_____
f. because my best friends decided to go and I wanted to stay with them.	2%	_____
g. because I want to become an educated person.	86%	_____
h. because I had heard about college social life, and it sounded fun.	5%	_____
i. because I want to occupy a particular place in society (e.g., middle or upper class).	37%	_____
j. because I want to change careers.	2%	_____
k. because I was bored and needed new interests, friends, and ideas in my life.	5%	_____
l. because I need more education in order to advance in my present career.	22%	_____
m. because I want to use my V.A. benefits.	2%	_____
n. other	10%	_____

Figure 1.1 The age range of these students was 16–55. Sixty percent were members of ethnic minority groups, and 52 percent were female.

2. Set specific goals—long-term, short-term, and alternate Psychologists tell us that we lead happier and more productive lives when we are working toward goals. Goals can be both long-term and short-term. Choose a tentative major and begin to work toward a long-term vocational or professional goal as soon as you can. Visualize the life this goal will allow you to lead five years from now whenever you have trouble concentrating. Set short-term goals daily. Make a mental plan of each day's activities the night before or when you wake up. Then set deadlines and work to

② set goals

long-term: job

short-term:
mental plans
- deadlines

reach your daily goals. When you finish, reward yourself for your accomplishments. At times you may find that the goals you have set are either impossible to reach or in some way a mistake. In such cases, develop alternate goals that will involve and motivate you as much as your original ones did.

- rewards

alternate goals

3. Work to guarantee early success Start immediately in each class to do your best work. This way you will give yourself the best opportunity for some immediate success. Early success earned by work well-done will motivate you and make concentration on future projects easier.

③ do first assignment well

Success = success

4. Reward yourself for reaching your goal Especially, plan regular rewards for meeting your daily short-term goals so that you will finish your work and also have something to look forward to at the end of the day.

④ Rewards
[short pool,
play video
games]

5. Think of the consequences of not meeting your goals On days when concentration is particularly difficult, visualize the life you are likely to lead if you do not meet your educational goals. Most students quickly rekindle an interest in school assignments when they contemplate a lifetime of working at the jobs they hold in the summer or after school.

⑤ think: what if I don't?

Sum. stay motivated to aid concen.
Remem. reasons for coming, set goals
(long, short, alternate). 1st assign.
done well. Remem. consequences
of not doing.

CONTINUE TO READ AND MARK THIS BOOK IN THIS WAY.

This method not only helps you to concentrate on your reading, it helps you to remember what you have read by employing some of the psychological factors that influence learning. (1) It enables you to perceive the author's *organization* of ideas, aiding both comprehension and memory. (2) It encourages you to *react* to the author's ideas (note the reader's comment in square brackets in the margin). And (3) it forces you to *repeat key ideas* in your mind as you write them in the margin and rewrite them in your own summary.