

The image is a book cover featuring a photograph of a person climbing a tall, narrow rock spire. The climber is positioned near the top of the spire, with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The spire itself is a dark, vertical rock formation. In the background, there are large, jagged mountains with patches of snow or ice, partially shrouded in mist or low clouds. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene conveys a sense of achievement and overcoming challenges.

# **DOING IT RIGHT**

*Improving College  
Learning Skills*

***Ben E. Johnson***

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## *Improving College Learning Skills*

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*This Book is for  
my best friend,  
Sharon Lewis.*

# Preface

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*Doing It Right: Improving College Learning Skills* is a unique book in that it combines several valuable study skills that, to my knowledge, have never before been included in any one college study skills text. Along with the expected—and essential—chapters on getting to know the college and its services, attending classes, scheduling time, learning to study, mastering a textbook, taking essay and objective tests, improving comprehension, increasing vocabulary, improving spelling, and learning to use a dictionary, *Doing It Right* contains additional valuable instruction in several areas. These areas include how to read faster, how to develop specific reading comprehension competencies, how to margin-mark while reading, how to use recent updates of reading-study systems to advantage, and how to improve listening, note-taking, and memorizing skills, while also learning an alphabet shorthand.

Probably one of the first things you become aware of when you glance at the table of contents and flip through the pages is just how much material there is in this book. Can all of this material even be covered in a single term? Shouldn't this really be two books, for use in two courses? When *Doing It Right* was conceived, I decided to put together a textbook with more material than could possibly be used in one academic term, thereby giving both the instructor and the student the choice of concentrating on whichever learning skills and chapters seemed to be most appropriate for each class's needs and for each individual student's interests. It is likely that teachers will focus on the chapters they feel most need to be covered by their students as a whole. This probably will leave many areas of the book unassigned, but individual students who feel the need to study on their own to acquire additional learning skills or to reinforce and supplement areas in which they feel weak can explore these unassigned areas independently.

In short, there is more material here than a one-term study skills course can cover thoroughly. Choices will have to be made. Teachers will assign the chapters they consider most important for the entire class; students will want to study additional chapters on their own and as they are able. Together, the in-class focus and the out-of-class self-study will provide a strong and effective learning combination.

## ORGANIZATION

*Doing It Right* is composed of twenty-two chapters arranged in the order that most instructors find they prefer, but since each chapter is complete by itself, chapters may be taught in any order that the instructor wishes.

The text is made up of eight major parts, each with a specific goal:

**Part One: Learning Skills.** This section of the text concentrates on ways of getting to know the college, making the most of classes, scheduling time, and concentrating on learning.

**Part Two: Reading Speed and Comprehension.** The six chapters in this section focus on ways to read faster, to increase comprehension, to master a textbook, to use a reading-study system, and to mark and underline efficiently.

**Part Three: Listening and Taking Lecture Notes.** This section deals with the importance of improving listening and note-taking skills and suggests an alphabet shorthand system that will double college students' writing and note-taking speeds.

**Part Four: Test Taking.** This section of the book begins with methods of preparing for tests and also covers eliminating test-taking anxiety and provides guidelines for taking both objective and essay tests.

**Part Five: In-Class Essay Writing.** Part Five concentrates on the place of the in-class essay and how to write it. The second chapter then analyzes the five-paragraph essay and its parts as the format most likely to be used successfully when writing in class under time pressures.

**Part Six: Memorization Skills.** This chapter discusses the benefits of building a strong memory and outlines the steps necessary to do so.

**Part Seven: Vocabulary and Spelling Skills.** This section focuses first on the why and how of building a larger vocabulary. It is followed by a chapter on spelling improvement with instructions that will quickly bring results.

**Part Eight: Learning to Use the Dictionary.** This final chapter shows students the richness of the dictionary as a resource and then focuses on the major uses of a dictionary for college students.

Throughout the text certain words are printed in **boldface** for emphasis. Students should be encouraged to look up anything unfamiliar in the useful glossary at the end of the book. Also at the back of the book are an index and additional forms for students to use in scheduling and revising study time.

## CHAPTER FORMAT

Each chapter generally follows a familiar pattern: instruction in a particular study skill, followed by exercises for students to apply what they have learned and to demonstrate competence in that skill. There are a great number (over 150) of practical exercises with a wide variety of formats, including exercises with essay answers. Some of the exercises are relatively easy, while others are a bit more challenging—but all of them are interesting and should hold student interest. In some chapters, the exercises are scattered throughout the chapter, while in others the exercises are gathered at the end of the chapter. All of the answers to the exercises are included in the *Instructor's Manual*, but in some chapters selected exercise answers are included at the end of the chapter, allowing students to check on their understanding of the material.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I believe that *Doing It Right* is a practical and useful guide for college students, but I do not believe that I have included everything in it that needs to be said, and I may have said some things in it that need to be changed. Therefore, please give me your comments and let me know what works and what doesn't, and how I can improve *Doing It Right*.

Ben E. Johnson

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# *PART I*

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## Learning Skills







# Chapter 1

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## Know What's What, What's Where, and Who's Who

Your choice of which college to attend depended on many factors: location, cost, career goals, size, where your parents attended, or even where your friends decided to attend. You may have selected a community college for your first two years of education and plan to transfer to a four-year college or state university for the last two years (or more) of your education. Or, while you may have chosen to start immediately at a four-year institution, it is not uncommon for students to transfer from one college to another before they finally graduate. There is a great degree of flexibility among colleges and universities, and when there is a need to transfer from one institution to another, it usually can be accomplished with relatively few problems. It is important for you to realize that you are now at a stage in your education where you can freely accommodate your changing interests and circumstances by attending the college of your choice.

### *The School Calendar*

Even before you arrive on campus you will need to be familiar with the school calendar of your college. This calendar is simply a schedule of the dates and times that you need to be aware of while you are a student. The calendar is always published for the entire school year and is printed in the college catalog. It is often also published separately; copies are kept in strategic locations around campus, such as the admissions office, library, residence halls, and student union. The calendar is updated frequently each term as new activities are added or as changes in scheduled activities occur. The primary function of the calendar is to list dates and times of events such as class registration, the first day of classes, vacations, examination weeks, graduation, and special events such as homecoming activities. Often an expanded calendar will include the dates of major athletic events.

The school calendar includes the **academic calendar**\*, which is simply a record of when each **term** begins and ends. At different colleges

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\*Words and phrases in **boldface** type may be found in the glossary.