

STEPS  
TO

# COLLEGE READING

DOROTHY U.  
SEYLER



# STEPS TO COLLEGE READING

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**Allyn and Bacon**  
Boston London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

*Vice President, Humanities:* Joseph Opiela  
*Marketing Manager:* Lisa Kimball  
*Editorial-Production Service:* Omegatype Typography, Inc.  
*Manufacturing Buyer:* Megan Cochran  
*Cover Administrator:* Linda Knowles



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A Viacom Company  
160 Gould Street  
Needham Heights, MA 02194

Internet: [www.abacon.com](http://www.abacon.com)  
America Online: keyword: College Online

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#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Seyler, Dorothy U.

Steps to college reading / Dorothy U. Seyler.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-0-205-26585-5

1. Reading (Higher education). I. Title.

LB2395.3.S49 1998

428.4'071'1—dc21

97-10323

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 02 01 00 99 98 97

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# **STEPS TO COLLEGE READING**

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# PREFACE

Are you ready to improve your reading? *Steps to College Reading* is ready to be your guide, to take you—yes—step by step to better reading skills. If you have the desire, *Steps* has the strategies to make you a better reader. But be forewarned. There is no magic wand inside these pages. The only way to improve your reading skills is to *read*. If you just start reading more, your skills will improve. But, if you want to prepare for the reading in your college classes, you do not have time to take the leisurely approach. You need good advice and directed practice. Your instructor and this text will provide both guidance and practice.

*Steps to College Reading* has been constructed on several principles. First, the best way to improve a skill is to understand the “sub-skills” that make it up and to practice each sub-skill separately before integrating them into an overall skill. Second, reading is a process that can be divided into the three basic steps of **Prepare–Read–Respond**. Third, reading is not a passive response to words. Instead, it requires the active engagement of a reader to make meaning from the words. And finally, reading needs a context. Readers need to know the author and the author’s purpose, as well as their own purpose in reading.

The text’s fourteen chapters comprise four steps to improved reading skills. Chapters 1 through 4 present the “nuts and bolts” of reading. These chapters explain the reading process and introduce strategies for expanding your vocabulary. (Instructors will find that this text’s simpler three-step reading strategy is compatible with other reading strategies with which they may be familiar.) Both students and instructors will notice the emphasis on vocabulary in these opening chapters. Improved reading may be said to begin with an expanding vocabulary. Some instructors may choose to start with the vocabulary chapters; others will work in units from those chapters in patterns of their own.

Chapters 5 through 9 offer the next step to improved reading. These chapters guide you through a process of increased awareness of the relationship between main ideas and details and show you how to use a writer’s structures and strategies as an aid to understanding main ideas, whether stated or implied. This step ends with a return to vocabulary building and the visual process in reading by working on spelling, on distinguishing between words that look alike, and on improving visual skills.

The next three chapters (Chapters 10–12) move to the step of reading and learning from college textbooks. Included are guidelines for, and practice

in, reading graphics, using writing-to-learn strategies, participating in class and preparing for testing, reading more efficiently, and building a college vocabulary. Aids to reading more efficiently focus on how and when to skim and to scan and how to increase reading speed without losing comprehension. Successfully completing the work in these chapters will give you added confidence in your other classes.

A final step, presented in Chapters 13 and 14, reminds you that active reading includes both emotional and analytic responses to what is read. Chapter 13 guides you through a study of connotation, metaphors, and irony—elements of writing that we find in both expressive and persuasive writing. This chapter not only introduces you to some of the kinds of essays you will read in college writing classes, but also prepares you to understand a writer's position in persuasive essays, a step to reading critically. Then Chapter 14 explores the critical reading of persuasive writing and emphasizes the importance of taking a stand on issues. The text ends with four additional selections that can be used as timed readings and for further practice in reading comprehension and reading critically.

In this text you will find clear explanations supported by many examples. You will have the opportunity to practice the skills developed in each chapter by working the many exercises that can be completed in your text. You will be able to practice your reading first with short passages and then apply new skills to longer ones. The chapter's readings come from a range of college textbooks, as well as newspapers and magazines.

*Steps to College Reading* is dedicated to helping you learn to read with understanding and to retain information and ideas from your reading. You have taken the first step by opening the book. Don't stop now. Turn the page and let's get to work!

Fortunately for both authors and their readers, no book is prepared alone. Many colleagues and friends have helped me think about how we read and how we learn. To all of them I am grateful. In particular I want to acknowledge Evonne Jones, Barbara Wilan, Pam Legatt, Pat Hodgdon, and Carol Ischinger for lending books and sharing ideas. I can never complete a book without calling on the gracious support of our reference librarians, especially Marian Delmore and Ruth Stanton. I also want to thank, once again, my most important "first reader," my daughter Ruth. The confidence of my editor, Joe Opiela, that I could do two developmental reading texts has helped me immensely, and for the day-to-day coping with questions and anxieties, no one does it better than Joe's assistant, Kate Tolini. Finally, the following reviewers have contributed many excellent suggestions throughout the development of this text: Leslie K. King, Coordinator of the Learning Skills Center, SUNY College at Oswego; Margaret McClain, Arkansas State University; Jeanne Campanelli, American River College; Elaine M. Fitzpatrick, Massasoit Community College; Janice Beran, McLennan Community College; and Mary Boyles, University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

# **STEPS TO COLLEGE READING**

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# CONTENTS

*Preface* xiii

## ■ CHAPTER 1

*Getting Started* 1

Your Reading Profile 3

Commitment 5

Concentration 5

*Steps to Improved Concentration: Before You Begin Reading* 5 *Steps to Improved Concentration: While You Are Reading* 7

Knowing about Reading 8

*Visual Distortions* 10 *Regression* 10 *Vocalization and Subvocalization* 10

Improving Visual Skills—1 11

Be an Active Reader 13

*Thomas V. DiBacco, “Dr. Franklin’s Tips for Staying Well”* 13

Chapter Review Quiz 20

## ■ CHAPTER 2

*Developing a Reading Strategy* 23

Prepare to Read 23

Why Have a Reading Strategy? 24

Prepare–Read–Respond: How the Steps Connect 25

Prepare 26

*Identify the Author, Type of Work and Subject to Make Predictions* 26

*Guidelines for Prereading* 28 *Identify What You Already Know* 32 *Raise*

*Questions to Fulfill Your Purpose in Reading* 33

Read 34

*Annotate* 35 *Guidelines for Annotating* 35 *An Example of Annotating: Wood and Wood, “Long-Term Memory”* 36 *Wood and Wood, “The Three Processes in Memory”* 37 *Monitor Comprehension* 38 *Guidelines for Fixing Comprehension* 38

Respond	40
<i>Reflect</i>	40
<i>Review</i>	42
Editors, <i>Washington Post</i> , “Megacities, Megachallenges”	42
Curtis and Barnes, “The Signs of Life”	47
Chapter Review Quiz	52

### ■ CHAPTER 3

<i>Word Power 1: Using Context Clues and Building Vocabulary</i>	54
Prepare to Read	54
Context Clues	55
<i>Definition</i>	58
<i>Examples</i>	60
<i>Comparison and Contrast</i>	62
<i>Experience/Logic</i>	65
Learning New Words	70
<i>Keep a Vocabulary Notebook</i>	71
<i>A Vocabulary Notebook: Guidelines</i>	71
<i>Make Vocabulary Cards</i>	72
<i>Vocabulary Cards: Guidelines</i>	72
<i>Learn New Words from Reading</i>	73
A Brief Book List	76
<i>Some Classic Novels</i>	76
<i>Some Contemporary Novels and Autobiographies</i>	76
Rosalie Maggio, “Naming”	77
Chapter Review Quiz	83

### ■ CHAPTER 4

<i>Word Power 2: Recognizing Word Parts and Knowing Your Dictionary</i>	86
Prepare to Read	86
Compound Words	87
Learning Words from Word Parts: Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes	88
<i>Prefixes That Express Time or Place</i>	89
<i>Prefixes That Create a Negative or Reversal</i>	91
<i>Additional Prefixes</i>	92
<i>Suffixes</i>	93
<i>Roots</i>	95
Knowing Your Dictionary	98
<i>Guide Words</i>	99
<i>Entry Word</i>	99
<i>Pronunciation</i>	99
<i>Parts of Speech</i>	100
<i>Meanings</i>	100
<i>Etymology</i>	100
<i>Other Forms of the Word</i>	100
<i>Plurals and Principle Verb Forms</i>	100
Pronunciation	101
<i>The Schwa</i>	102
<i>Pronouncing Unfamiliar Words</i>	103
<i>Guidelines for Dividing Words into Syllables</i>	103

Abbreviations Used in Dictionary Entries	104
Working with Word Meanings	105
Sydney J. Harris, "Opposing Principles Help Balance Society"	111
Chapter Review Quiz	115

## ■ CHAPTER 5

<i>Distinguishing Between General and Specific Statements</i>	118
Prepare to Read	118
General and Specific Statements	118
Levels of Specificity	122
Recognizing General and Specific Sentences	127
<i>Recognizing Levels of Specificity in Sentences</i>	128
<i>Seeing Connections Between Sentences in Writing</i>	130
Understanding Complicated Sentences	136
Michael Scott, "In the Rain Forest"	140
Chapter Review Quiz	148

## ■ CHAPTER 6

<i>Understanding Main Ideas</i>	151
Prepare to Read	151
Identifying a Paragraph's Topic	153
<i>Guidelines for Topics</i>	154
Identifying Main Ideas	158
<i>Distinguishing Between Topic and Main Idea</i>	158
<i>Guidelines for Identifying Main Ideas</i>	160
<i>Locating the Main Idea in Paragraphs</i>	162
<i>Placement of the Topic Sentence</i>	163
Reading Longer Passages	170
<i>Identifying Main Ideas in Longer Passages</i>	170
<i>Grice and Skinner, "Know How You React to Stress"</i>	171
<i>Distinguishing among Details</i>	172
The Summary	173
Jackson J. Spielvogel, "Social and Economic Structure in Ancient Egypt"	173
<i>Guidelines for Summary</i>	175
Jackson J. Spielvogel, "The Pyramids"	175
Robert G. Athearn, "The Significance of the Frontier"	177
Chapter Review Quiz	182

■ **CHAPTER 7***Recognizing Strategies and Structures in Writing* 185

Prepare to Read 185

Listing 186

*Signal Words* 187 *Basic Structure for Listing* 187 *How to Annotate Listings* 187

Time Sequence and Process 190

*Signal Words* 190 *Basic Structure for Time Sequence or Process* 190  
*Annotating the Pattern of Time Sequence or Process* 190

Definition 192

*Signal Words and Other Strategies* 193 *Basic Structure for Definition* 193  
*How to Annotate Definitions* 193

Comparison and Contrast 195

*Signal Words* 195 *Basic Structure for Comparison or Contrast* 196  
*How to Annotate Comparison or Contrast* 196

Cause and Effect 199

*Signal Words* 199 *Basic Structure for Cause and Effect* 199 *How to Annotate Cause and Effect* 200

Mixed Patterns 205

*Patricia Lauber, "Types of Volcanic Mountains"* 206

E. J. Dionne, Jr., "The Problem with Moderates" 208

Chapter Review Quiz 213

■ **CHAPTER 8***Drawing Inferences and Understanding Implied Main Ideas* 216

Prepare to Read 216

What Are Inferences? 218

*Drawing Inferences from Life's Experiences* 218

Drawing Inferences from Reading 220

*Why Writers Suggest Rather Than State* 220 *The Role of Knowledge* 221

Characteristics of Appropriate Inferences 224

Understanding Implied Main Ideas 225

Drawing Inferences and Understanding Main Ideas in Longer Passages 230

*Guidelines for Understanding Implied Meanings* 231 *Richard Morin, "Dumbing Down Democracy"* 231 *Joseph R. Conlin, "John D. Rockefeller"* 233*Vincent Wilson, Jr., "Amelia Earhart"* 234

Chapter Review Quiz 239

■ **CHAPTER 9***Word Power 3: Distinguishing among Words* 242

Prepare to Read 242

Words that Sound Alike: Homonyms 244

Words That Look or Sound Somewhat Alike: Pseudohomonyms 246

Idioms 247

Improving Spelling 250

*Use Your Dictionary for Spelling and Pronunciation* 250 *Use Electronic Aids When You Write* 251 *Divide Words into Word Parts or Syllables to Aid Spelling* 252 *Review Basic Spelling Rules* 252 *Practice, Practice, Practice (280 Common Words)* 257

Improving Visual Skills—2 260

Gerald Corey, “Choosing an Occupation or Career” 263

Chapter Review Quiz 269

■ **CHAPTER 10***Reading Graphics* 272

Prepare to Read 272

How to Read Graphics 273

Pictures and Photographs 275

Diagrams 277

Maps 280

Tables 281

Graphs and Charts 285

*Pie Charts* 285 *Bar Charts* 287 *Line Graphs* 288 *Flow Charts* 291

Boyce Rensberger, “Graphs Can Lie, Easy as Pie” 292

Rachel Carson, “The Coral Coast” 298

Chapter Review Quiz 308

■ **CHAPTER 11***Reading and Studying for College Classes* 312

Prepare to Read 312

Reading Textbooks 313

*Prepare* 313 *Read* 314 *Grice and Skinner, “Listening vs. Hearing”* 315 *Respond* 316 *Donatelle and Davis, “Defining Addiction”* 317

Writing to Learn Strategies	318
<i>Outlining</i>	318
<i>Guidelines for Outlining</i>	320
<i>Mapping</i>	321
<i>Guidelines for Mapping</i>	323
<i>Note Taking: The Cornell Method</i>	324
<i>Guidelines for the Cornell Method of Notes</i>	324
Learning from a Textbook Chapter	325
<i>Prepare</i>	325
<i>Read (O'Connor and Sabato, Chapter 1, "American Government: Roots and Reform")</i>	326
<i>Respond</i>	353
Reinforcing Learning in Class	354
<i>Preparing for Class</i>	354
<i>Participating in Class</i>	354
Prepare for Testing	355
<i>Guidelines for Short-Answer Testing</i>	356
<i>Multiple Choice</i>	357
<i>Fill in the Blank</i>	357
<i>True/False</i>	357
<i>Short Answer</i>	358
<i>Essay Tests</i>	358
Chapter Review Quiz	359

## ■ CHAPTER 12

<i>Reading More Efficiently</i>	362
Prepare to Read	362
Scanning	363
Skimming	372
<i>Guidelines for Skimming</i>	374
Improving Visual Skills—3	377
<i>Rapid Word Recognition</i>	377
<i>Rapid Phrase Recognition</i>	380
Efficient Reading Through Aggressive Reading	383
<i>Calculating Your Reading Speed</i>	384
Timed Reading I: J. A. Devito, "Some Principles of Communication"	385
Timed Reading II: Jeanne Marie Laskas, "The Rude Awaken"	388
Timed Reading III: Lefton and Valvatne, "Coping, Health, and a Positive Attitude"	391
Chapter Review Quiz	394

## ■ CHAPTER 13

<i>Responding to Expressive Writing</i>	396
Prepare to Read	396
Characteristics of Expressive Writing	398
<i>Why Write Indirectly?</i>	398
Connotation	399
Figurative Language	401
<i>Metaphors</i>	402
<i>Langston Hughes, "Dreams"</i>	403
<i>Irony</i>	404
<i>Amy Lowell, "Taxi"</i>	405
<i>A. E. Housman, "In the Morning, In the Morning"</i>	406

Reading Descriptive Essays	407
Reading Narrative Essays and Short Fiction	410
Mike Rose, <i>passage from Lives on the Boundary</i>	411
Ron Kovic, <i>passage from Born on the Fourth of July</i>	412
George Orwell, "A Hanging"	413
Tracy Kidder, "Mrs. Zajac"	414
Cherokee story, "How the Sun Came"	417
Langston Hughes, "Early Autumn"	420
Chapter Review Quiz	424
William Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"	425

## ■ CHAPTER 14

<i>Responding to Persuasive Writing</i>	427
Prepare to Read	427
Characteristics of the Critical Reader	428
Distinguishing Fact from Opinion	429
"Just" an Opinion	432
Personal Preferences	432
Judgments	432
Inferences	433
Guidelines for Evaluating Inferences	434
Recognizing Your Biases	438
Understanding the Writer's Position	440
Evaluating Arguments and Taking a Stand	442
Recognizing Logical Fallacies	443
Taking a Stand	446
Nat Hentoff, "Ban Boxing Now"	447
Ellen Goodman, "Self-Serving Society"	452
Chapter Review Quiz	458

### *Additional Readings* 460

Helena Curtis and N. Sue Barnes, "Plate Tectonics and the Breakup of Pangaea"	460
Vincent Ryan Ruggiero, "Conformity"	464
Mariah Burton Nelson, "Who Wins? Who Cares?"	467
James Herriot, "A New Day for Alfred"	471

### *Glossary* 482

### *Credits* 485

### *Index* 489

# CHAPTER 1

## *Getting Started*

In this chapter you will learn:

- How long-term goals relate to your reading course
- About your reading profile
- The roles of commitment and concentration in reading improvement
- What reading is

In his *Autobiography*, Ben Franklin lists thirteen virtues that he wants to develop. He then explains his specific strategy for success: Work on one at a time until it becomes a habit and then move on to the next. Why did Franklin want to make each virtue a habit? Because he knew that we do more out of habit than from principle. What we actually do—day in and day out—shapes the character that makes us who we are.

Stephen R. Covey, in his popular bestseller *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, asks readers to imagine that they have come to a funeral—their own. They will hear eulogies— talks praising a dead person by family and friends—about themselves. If this were happening to you, what would you like to hear others saying about you and your life?

### **EXERCISE 1-1 Who Do You Want to Be?**

*I. Reflect on what you would want others to say about you at the end of your life. Then write a paragraph “eulogy” for yourself—what you hope others would be able to say about you.*

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*II. Now organize what you have written into clusters of ideas. Have you said something about personal fulfillment? About lifestyle? About career? About money and possessions? About education? About family life? State the main points about yourself, in phrases, under appropriate headings.*

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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Do you see your goals and values somewhat more clearly now? We really cannot take charge of our lives until we know what kind of life we want to have, what kind of person we want to be. But just having an idea of the future is not enough to get us there. We must also figure out what steps are

needed to achieve our goals. For example, suppose you included a successful career in your “eulogy.” How do you expect to reach that position? Or, suppose you want to be known as a spiritual person. What steps can you take to achieve that goal?



### EXERCISE 1-2 What Steps Do You Need to Take?

*Think about how you can become the person you have written about. List specific steps you need to take to achieve each of the goals you included in Exercise 1-1. (You may want to work with a class partner and help each other with your lists of steps.)*

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Did you mention education, either in your “eulogy” or in the steps to achieve your goals? Is it really possible to get to where you want to be without a good education? If you seek a career that requires a college degree, you will be busy studying for several years. Suppose one goal is to start your own business. There are books on this subject which guide you through the steps. You will also need to study government regulations and tax codes for small businesses. In addition, there are guides to getting in touch with your inner self, guides to parenting, and guides to maintaining fulfilling relationships. Many people will tell you that learning is a lifelong activity. It does not end when you finish formal schooling.

### ■ YOUR READING PROFILE

What is one way to keep learning and moving toward your goals? **By reading!** Will your reading habits and attitudes toward reading help you reach