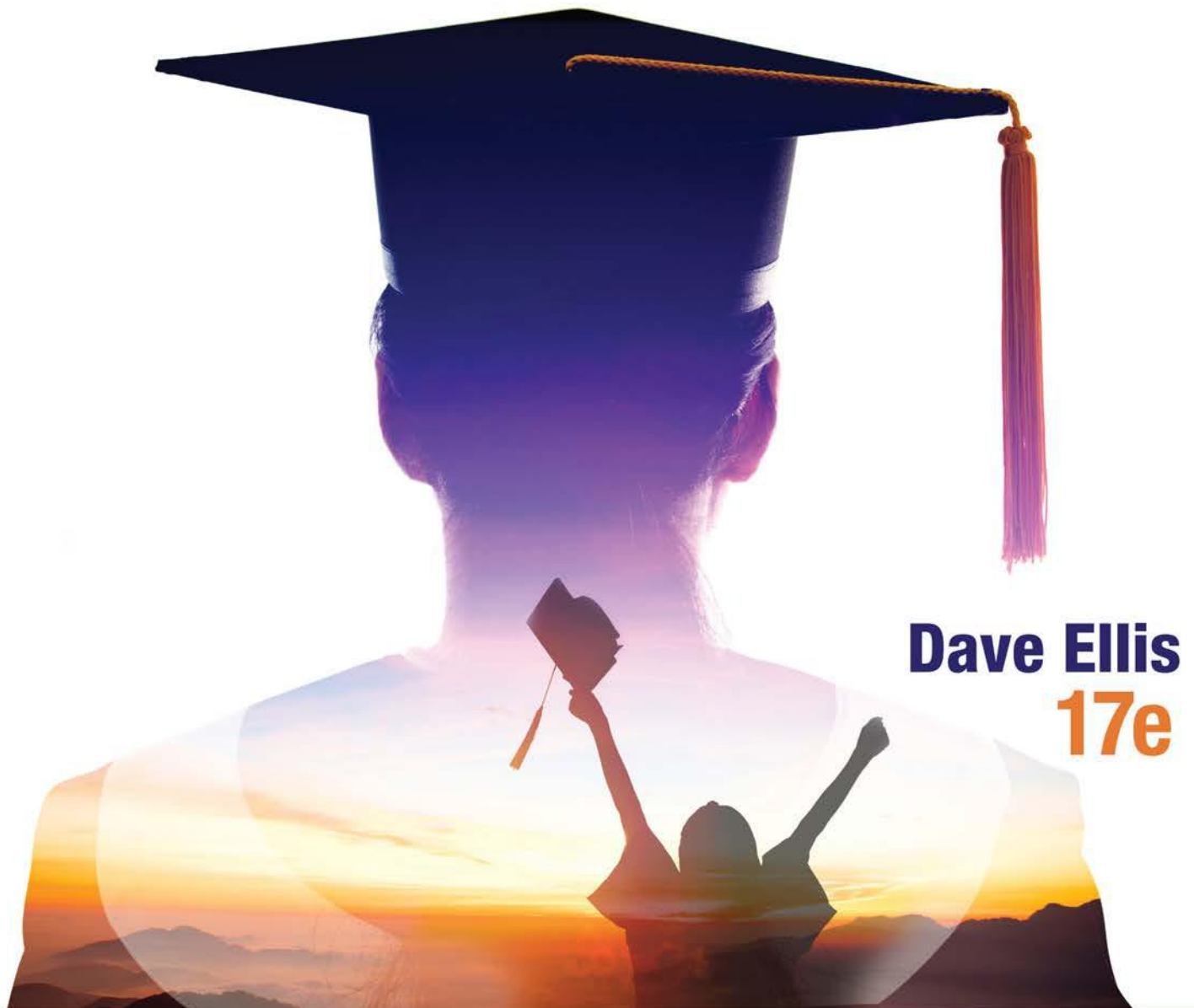


BECOMING A
**MASTER
STUDENT**

MAKING THE CAREER CONNECTION



Dave Ellis
17e

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Contributing Editor:
Doug Toft



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Preface

Children are great students. They quickly master complex skills like language, and they have fun doing it. For young children, learning is a high-energy process that involves experimentation, discovery, and sometimes broken dishes. Then comes school. Drill and drudgery can replace discovery and dish breaking. Learning may become a drag. Use this book to reverse that process. Rediscover what you knew as a child—that joy and learning go hand in hand. Becoming a master student is about gaining knowledge and skills by unleashing the natural learner within you.

This book is full of suggestions for doing that. Every chapter is packed with tips, techniques, methods, tools, and processes for you to play with. Sometimes people feel overwhelmed by this fact. “There are more ideas in here than I could ever use this term—or even during the rest of my education,” they say.

Exactly. That’s the whole point. And there are several reasons for this. One is that *Becoming a Master Student* is designed for long-term use. You’ll find enough ideas to play with for years beyond graduation—for the rest of your life, in fact.

There are also many suggestions here because some of them may work well for you and others might not. Consider note-taking methods, for example. Some students rave about mind-mapping—a visual way of recording ideas. Other students find mind-mapping too messy and swear by traditional outlines instead. This book offers detailed instructions for both methods—and many more. Feel free

to play with all of them, combine them, modify them, and invent new methods of your own.

That’s the biggest reason for the density of ideas in this book. Underlying every paragraph and every page is an invitation to *actively experiment* with the content. Find out what truly works for you.

People who excel in any field are experimenters. They’re willing to consider many options—even the ones that sound crazy at first. When faced with a new idea, their first reaction is not to say: *That will never work*. Instead, they ask: *How might that work?* Then they take action to find out.

It took hundreds of people to produce *Becoming a Master Student*. Besides the author, there were editors, designers, proofreaders, and advisors. Beyond them were hundreds of educators and students who contributed everything from a single comment to the inspiration for entire chapters.

The true author of this book, however, is you. Your responses to any suggestion can lead you to think new thoughts, say new things, and do what you never believed you could do. If you’re willing to experiment with new ways of learning, the possibilities are endless. This process is more fundamental and more powerful than any individual tool or technique you’ll ever read about.

Consider the possibility that you can create the life of your dreams. There are people who scoff at this idea, and they have a perspective that is widely shared. Please set it aside. The process of experimenting with your life is sheer joy, and it never ends.

Begin now. ✦

About this Book

Becoming a Master Student, 17th edition, encourages students to make the career connection early in their college experience. Serving as their step-by-step guide, this proven favorite bridges the gap between college and career, equipping students with the mindset and tools to gain a deeper knowledge of themselves and empowering them to succeed in college

and beyond. This edition has been thoroughly updated with the latest facts and examples based on research, market feedback, and instructor input. New chapters on Career and Relationships walk first-year students through strategies to achieve career readiness and to flourish personally and academically.

About the Author

Dave Ellis is a leadership coach, author, educator, and philanthropist. A respected lecturer and electrifying workshop leader, he has captivated audiences worldwide since first sharing his principles in 1979. Ellis got started in education in 1976. After earning a master's degree in mathematics, he taught computer science for six years at National American University, where he became assistant dean of student services. In 1979, he designed a course to improve student retention and then traveled the country for a decade conducting workshops for teachers on ways to improve student retention and test scores.

He began training coaches in 1983 and started a public course for coaches in 1993. He puts into practice the principles he teaches, utilizing his remarkable system in his own life. Friends and colleagues often describe him as the happiest person they know with an amazingly wonderful life. He is president of Breakthrough Enterprises, a publishing and consulting company, as well as founder and president of the Brande Foundation, a nonprofit organization aiding organizations working toward world sufficiency, environmental integrity, human rights, and personal transformation.

Contributing Editor

Doug Toft has been a writer and editor since 1980. He has a BA in humanities and an MA in communications media with a focus on instructional design. Doug was introduced to *Becoming a Master Student* by Joyce Weinsheimer, EdD, then program director for the Learning and Academic Skills Center at the University of Minnesota. Working

directly with author Dave Ellis, Doug edited the sixth edition of *Becoming a Master Student* in 1990 and has been a contributing editor to every edition since then. He has also freelanced for Hazelden Publishing, Mayo Clinic, UnitedHealthcare, and other organizations and individuals.

Acknowledgements

While much has changed in the landscape of higher education over the past several years, many enduring principles remain. Special thanks to Doug Toft, contributing editor, who has for many years been an anchor for this text, while artfully adapting it to more accurately reflect the culture surrounding us.

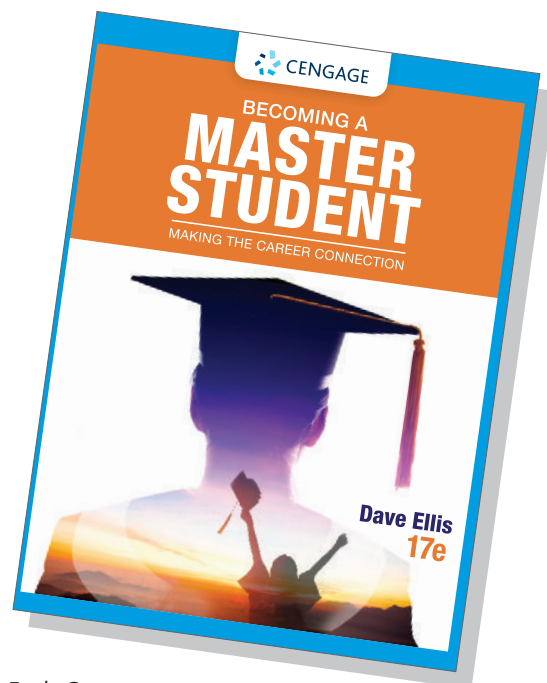
We are grateful to the numerous invaluable reviewers who shared their feedback, experiences, suggestions, and insights to help bring about this new edition. You have kept us abreast of current research and trends in college success, equipping us to serve the ever-evolving needs of first year students.

Kanya Allen, *Hopkinsville Community College*
Jennifer Middleton, *Seminole State College*
Sharon Skwarek, *Colorado Northwestern Community College*
Cassandra Varnell, *Hinds Community College*
Jason Walker, *Salem International University*
Janet Coolman, *Mesa Community College*
Sheryl Hartman, *Miami Dade College*
Maurice Smith Jr., *Virginia State University*
Whitney Chambers, *Pearl River Community College*

NEW

to this Edition

- This edition of *Becoming a Master Student*—now subtitled *Making the Career Connection*—has a new chapter structure. The *Communicating* chapter focuses on writing well, making effective presentations, and creating digital content. The new *Relationships* chapter offers strategies for deep listening, assertive speaking, conflict resolution, and cultural competence. In addition, a new *Career* chapter guides students to persist until graduation, take charge of their work lives, and engage in lifelong learning.
- A *Career Connection* feature at the end of each chapter suggests ways for students to transfer skills from the classroom to the workplace. Each *Career Connection* ends with a scenario that offers an example of how this transfer can take place.
- Journal entries now include discovery *and* intention statements, further reinforcing the Master Student Process—the continuous cycle of insight, planning, and action.
- The *Master Student Profiles* have been refreshed with six new stories about people who used strategies presented in the text to overcome real-world challenges.
- Health and wellness is addressed across chapters, including new strategies for maintaining mental health in environments such as a pandemic.
- Many visuals throughout the text now include prompts for critical and creative thinking.
- Each chapter has been revised to align with instructional objectives for student success courses.
- The entire text has been revised to update facts, examples, and references to technology—and to incorporate the bias-free and inclusive language recommendations in the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition.
- Interactive elements throughout the text—including the popular Discovery Wheel—have been revised to reflect these changes.
- In summary, *Becoming a Master Student*, 17e is a “one-stop shop” for college and career success. First-year students who want to flourish academically *and* gain career readiness can meet both goals with this text.



CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER UPDATES

Introduction: The Master Student

- **New article:** The *Career Connection* encourages students to approach their education with a skills perspective by asking: *What do I want to be able to do after I graduate that I cannot do now?* This article also introduces the concept of transferable skills and guides students to (1) discover the transferable skills that they already possess and (2) develop new transferable skills.

Chapter 1: Discovering Yourself

- **New approach to learning styles:** New and revised articles and journal entries that encompass several models replace the Learning Style Inventory from previous editions:

- *Discovering your learning styles* introduces the concept of learning styles and summarizes the potential benefits of learning styles to higher ed students.
- *Learning from experience* summarizes David Kolb's theory of experiential learning.
- *Journal Entry: Discovering how you learn from experience* prompts students to reflect on their preferences for learning through feeling (concrete experience), watching (reflective observation), thinking (abstract conceptualization), and doing (active experimentation).
- *Learning through your senses* summarizes differences between visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic strategies (the VARK model).

- *Journal Entry: Discovering how you learn through your senses* asks students to look for examples of VARK preferences in their own learning strategies.
- *Expanding your learning styles* presents detailed examples of ways for students to experiment with new strategies, accommodate the learning styles of others, and stay grounded in the overarching skill of metacognition.
- **New sidebar:** *The magic of metacognition* situates the material about learning styles in the larger context of “thinking about thinking”—a major benefit of higher education and tool for lifelong learning.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* presents the concept of self-management as a process for (1) assessing current knowledge and skills, (2) planning to change behavior, and (3) monitoring the results.

Chapter 2: Time

- **Revised exercise:** *Practicing Critical Thinking: The Time Monitor/Time Plan* now focuses on using digital technology to collect useful data for scheduling events, setting goals, and creating effective to-do lists.
- **Revised article:** *The ABC daily to-do list* includes new suggestions for planning tasks, setting priorities, aligning daily activities with personal goals, and applying insights from the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* links time management to the core values of focused attention and integrity. It also summarizes the Getting Things Done method, a popular framework for productivity, and suggests ways to master the challenges of remote work.

Chapter 3: Memory

- **New master student profile:** José Cordova recalls childhood experiences with his father that flowered into insights for persisting through adversity and managing the transition from military service to civilian life.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* suggests ways to apply memory skills at work and avoid cognitive biases that distort our recall of key events.

Chapter 4: Reading

- **New article:** The *Career Connection* defines the core skills of information literacy—consuming, curating, and creating—and suggests ways to apply these skills in the workplace.

Chapter 5: Notes

- **New master student profile:** Peyton King reflects on how she managed the transition from higher education to the workplace during a pandemic and offers ways for students to gain the most benefit from their first year of higher education.

- **New article:** The *Career Connection* suggests that students use note-taking skills for the rest of their lives to create a personal knowledge base that documents their continuous learning.

Chapter 6: Tests

- **Revised article:** *Let go of anxiety* goes beyond test-related stress to include strategies for managing anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* suggests ways to manage stress in the workplace and get the most from performance reviews.

Chapter 7: Thinking

- **New master student profile:** Tran Pham reflects on crafting her career after graduation and the benefits of a degree that builds both “soft” skills and technical skills.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* suggests ways to apply thinking skills when developing new products and services, solving day-to-day problems on the job, and making ethical decisions at work.

Chapter 8: Communicating

- **New Journal Entry:** *Exploring your feelings about writing* encourages students to analyze their felt experience of “writer’s block” and experiment with solutions.
- **New sidebar:** *Speaking professionally at work* offers suggestions for getting the most from meetings as well as work-related phone calls and video conferences.
- **New article:** *Six principles of persuasion* summarizes Robert Cialdini’s widely-quoted strategies for influencing people: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity.
- **New exercise:** *Practicing Critical Thinking: Using the principles of persuasion* guides students to apply Cialdini’s principles to their next presentation.
- **New article:** *Creating effective content for online audiences* offers a process for effective emails, text messages, social media updates, webinars, websites, podcasts, and videos.
- **New article:** *Creating a personal website* explains the benefits of creating an online presence, including documenting learning, building a digital portfolio to use in job hunting, and gaining transferable skills.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* explores strategies for leading effective meetings and practicing persuasion in the workplace, including an expanded definition of “selling.”

Chapter 9: Relationships

- **New Power Process:** *Choose your conversations* reminds students that their conversations can reinforce views of themselves as victims of circumstance—or as people with the power to create their future.

- **New master student profile:** Raheema Jones Howard shares her experience of bipolar depression and post-traumatic stress disorder along with the role of supportive relationships in transcending her past.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* explores the nature of professional relationships and the timeless value of “people skills” in the workplace.

Chapter 10: Money

- **Revised exercise:** *Practicing Critical Thinking: The Money Monitor/Money Plan* includes strategies for using digital technology to collect, interpret, and act on data about income and expenses.
- **New master student profile:** Stephanie McGuire reflects on the unplanned events that led to starting her own business and the role of money management to career mastery.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* defines *financial literacy* and suggests ways for students to apply this cluster of skills in the workplace.

Chapter 11: Career

- **New article:** *Nine ways to think about your career* suggests ways for students to find their place in an economy that is dynamic, chaotic, and brimming with opportunity.
- **New article:** *Expand your skills* guides students to discover their existing skills as a foundation for acquiring new work-content and transferable skills.
- **New Journal Entry:** *Recognize and develop your skills* gives students the opportunity to use the strategies presented in *Expand your skills*.

- **New article:** *Learning on the job* suggests ways to dissolve the boundaries between classroom and workplace, including internships and mentorships.
- **New article:** *Creating a personal development plan* explains how students can apply the Master Student Process to enhance their performance at work.
- **New article:** *Developing a strong work ethic* explores the traditional values of competence, initiative, humility, etiquette, and sound judgment and their enduring role in the workplace.
- **New master student profile:** Eric Jorgenson reflects on how he used digital literacy skills to create his career.
- **New article:** The *Career Connection* urges students to connect with their school’s career center and to experiment with alternatives to traditional career planning.
- **New Journal Entry:** *Long-term planning for college and career success* guides students to synthesize and act on the insights they’ve gained throughout their student success course. This includes revisiting their purpose for entering higher education, making a trial choice of major, choosing courses, testing their career choices, reviewing the skills they’ll develop in higher education, and planning to fund their education.

Back Matter:

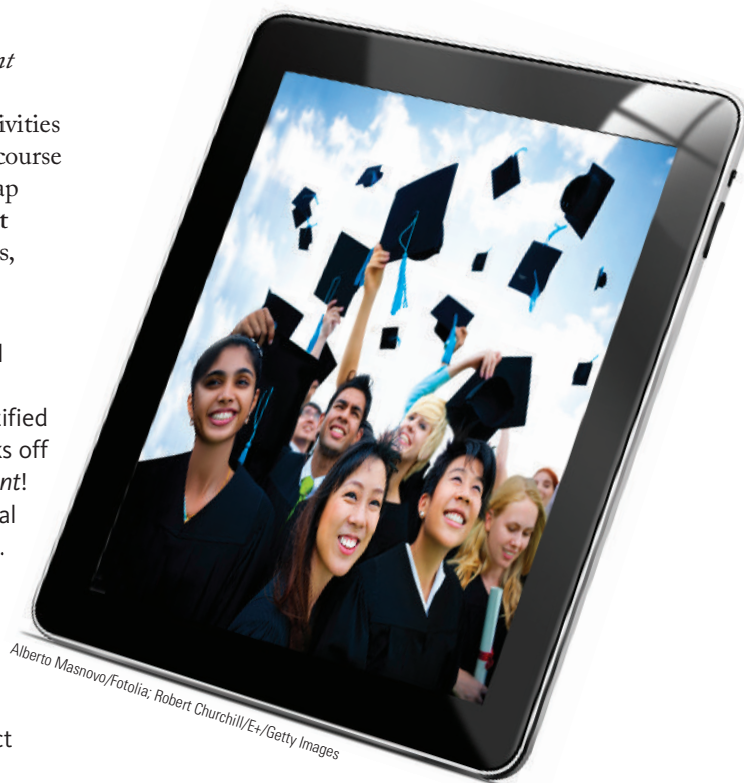
- **New article:** The *College Success Glossary* defines key terms used in the text.
- **Revised elements:** *Additional Reading*, *Endnotes*, and *Index* are updated for this new edition. ❖



Embracing TECHNOLOGY

MindTap College Success for *Becoming a Master Student* combines tools like a robust self-assessment, readings, flashcards, journal entries, quizzes, and other digital activities designed intentionally to guide students through their course and transform them into master students. This MindTap follows a “Practice It, Journal It, Apply It” structure that guides students through book-aligned learning exercises, followed by authentic application opportunities.

- The College Success Factors Index (CSFI) is a personal success indicator that helps students identify their strengths and areas for growth in 10 key factors identified by researchers to affect college success. The CSFI kicks off MindTap College Success for *Becoming a Master Student*!
- “Practice It” activities align with the “Practicing Critical Thinking” activities found in each chapter of the book. These activities are designed to help students strengthen their critical thinking skills both in the classroom and online.
- “Journal It” activities align with the “Journal Entries” found in each chapter of the book. These activities are designed to give students an opportunity to reflect on the key learnings in each chapter.
- “Apply It” activities are designed to bridge the understanding of chapter concepts with their real-world applications in both college and career.



Alberto Masnovo/Fotolia; Robert Churchill/Es/Getty Images

Cengage Infuse for College Success is the first-of-its-kind digital learning platform that leverages Learning Management Systems’ (LMS) functionality so that instructors can enjoy simple course set up and intuitive management tools. Offering just the right amount of auto graded content—like Concept Checks and Chapter Quizzes—you’ll be ready to go online at the drop of a hat.

FOR INSTRUCTORS

Additional instructor resources for this product are available online. Instructor assets include an Instructor’s Manual, Educator’s Guide, PowerPoint slides, and a test bank powered by Cognero. Sign up or sign in at www.cengage.com to search for and access this product and its online resources. ✦

DISCOVERY & INTENTION STATEMENT

GUIDELINES

DISCOVERY STATEMENTS

- ☐ Record the specifics about your thoughts, feelings, and behavior.
- ☐ Notice your thoughts, observe your actions, and record them accurately.
- ☐ Use discomfort as a signal.
- ☐ Feeling uncomfortable, bored, or tired might be a signal that you're about to do valuable work.
- ☐ Suspend judgment.
- ☐ When you are discovering yourself, be gentle.
- ☐ Tell the truth.
- ☐ The closer you get to the truth, the more powerful your Discovery Statements.

INTENTION STATEMENTS

- ☐ Make intentions positive.
- ☐ Focus on what you want rather than what you don't want.
- ☐ Make intentions observable.
- ☐ Be specific about your intentions.
- ☐ Make intentions small and achievable.
- ☐ Break large goals into small, specific tasks that can be accomplished quickly.
- ☐ Set timelines.
- ☐ Set a precise due date for tasks you intend to do.
- ☐ Move from intention to action.

If you want new results in your life, then take action. ✖

The Master Student

why

You can ease your transition to higher education and set up a lifelong pattern of success by starting with some key strategies.

how

Take a few minutes to skim this chapter. Find three suggestions that look especially useful. Make a note to yourself or mark the pages where the strategies that you intend to use are located in the chapter.

what if...

I could use the ideas in this book to more consistently get what I want in my life?

what is included . . .

- 2** Power Process: Discover what you want
- 3** Rewrite this book
- 4** Master student qualities
- 8** The master student process—Discovery
- 9** The master student process—Intention
- 11** The master student process—Action
- 12** Keep the process alive
- 13** Get the most from this book
- 15** Motivation—I'm just not in the mood
- 17** Ways to change a habit
- 24** Making the transition to higher education
- 27** Succeeding as a first-generation student
- 30** Career connection

do you have a minute?

Take a minute to make a list of anything about your life that's nagging at you as incomplete or unresolved. Possibilities for this list include:

- Longstanding problems that are still not solved
- Projects that you'd like to finish and haven't yet started
- Tasks that you've been putting off
- Habits that you'd like to stop—or start

Save this list and refer to it as you read and do this chapter. *Everything you wrote down is a clue about something that's important to you.* This chapter is filled with strategies for getting clear about what you want and taking immediate steps to get it.



Discover what you want

Imagine a man who tries to buy a plane ticket for his next vacation with no destination in mind. He pulls out his iPad and logs in to his favorite website for trip planning. He gets a screen that prompts him for details about his destination. And he leaves all the fields blank.

"I'm not fussy," says the would-be vacationer. "I just want to get away. I'll just accept whatever the computer coughs up."

Compare this person to another traveler who books a flight to Ixtapa, Mexico, departing on Saturday, March 23, and returning Sunday, April 7—window seat, first class, and vegetarian meals.

Now, ask yourself which traveler is more likely to end up with a vacation that they'll enjoy.

The same principle applies in any area of life. Knowing where we want to go increases the probability that we will arrive at our destination. Discovering what we want makes it more likely that we'll attain it.

Okay, so the example about the traveler with no destination is far-fetched. Before you dismiss it, though, do an informal experiment: Ask three other students what they want to get out of their education. Be prepared for hemming, hawing, and vague generalities.

This is amazing, considering the stakes involved. Students routinely invest years of their lives and thousands of dollars, with only a hazy idea of their destination in life.

Now suppose that you asked someone what they wanted from their education and you got this answer: "I plan to get a degree in journalism, with double minors in earth science and Portuguese, so that I can work as a reporter covering the environment in Brazil." The details of a person's vision offer clues to their skills and sense of purpose.

Another clue is the presence of "stretch goals"—those that are big *and* achievable. A 40-year-old might spend years talking about his desire to be a professional athlete someday. Chances are, that's no longer achievable. However, setting a goal to lose 10 pounds by playing basketball at the gym three days a week is another matter. That's a stretch—a challenge. It's also doable.

Discovering what you want helps you succeed in higher education. Many students quit school simply because they are unsure about what they want from it. With well-defined goals in mind, you can look for connections between what you want and what you study. The more connections, the more likely you'll stay in school—and get what you want in every area of life. ■



Gil C./Shutterstock.com

REWRITE

this book

How do you visibly demonstrate that you're actively reading a text?

Something happens when you get involved with a book by writing in it. *Becoming a Master Student* is about learning, and learning results when you are active. When you make notes in the margin, you can hear yourself talking with the author. When you doodle and underline, you see the author's ideas taking shape. You can even argue with the author and come up with your own theories and explanations. In all of these ways, you can become a coauthor of this book. Rewrite it to make it yours.

While you're at it, you can create symbols or codes that will help you when reviewing the text later on. You might insert a "Q" where you have questions, or put exclamation points or

stars next to important ideas. You could also circle words to look up in a dictionary.

All these ideas apply to reading e-books as well. Most digital platforms for reading books offer ways to highlight passages and add your own notes. Check them out.

Remember, if any idea in this book doesn't work for you, you can rewrite it. Change the exercises to fit your needs. Create a new technique by combining several others. Create a technique out of thin air!

Find something you agree or disagree with and write about it. Or draw a diagram. Better yet, do both. Let creativity be your guide. Have fun.

Begin rewriting now. ✱

practicing CRITICAL THINKING

1

Textbook reconnaissance

Start becoming a master student this moment by doing a 15-minute "**textbook reconnaissance**." First, read this book's Table of Contents. Do it in three minutes or less. Next, look at every page in the book. Move quickly. Scan

headlines. Look at pictures. Notice forms, charts, and diagrams.

Look especially for ideas you can use. When you find one, note the location and a short description of the idea.

Master student QUALITIES

This book is about something that cannot be taught. It's about becoming a master student.



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When you describe someone as a master at what they do, what specifically do you mean?

Mastery means attaining a level of skill that goes beyond technique. For a master, work is effortless. Struggle evaporates. The master carpenter is so familiar with tools that they are part of that person. To a master chef, utensils are old friends. Because these masters don't have to think about the details of the process, they bring more of themselves to their work.

Mastery can lead to flashy results: an incredible painting, for example, or a gem of a short story. In basketball, mastery might result in an unbelievable shot at the buzzer. For a musician, it might be the performance of a lifetime, the moment when everything comes together. You could describe the experience as “flow” or “being in the zone.”

Often, the result of mastery is a sense of profound satisfaction, well-being, and timelessness. Distractions fade. Time stops. Work becomes play. After hours of patient practice, after setting clear goals and getting precise feedback, the master has learned to be fully in control.

At the same time, the master lets go of control. Results happen without effort, struggle, or worry. Work seems self-propelled. Masters are in control by being out of control. They let go and allow the creative process to take over. That's why after a spectacular performance by an athlete or performer, observers often say, “He played full out—and made it look like he wasn't even trying.”

Likewise, master students make learning look easy. They work hard without seeming to make

any effort. They are relaxed *and* alert, disciplined *and* spontaneous, focused *and* fun-loving.

You might say that those statements don't make sense. Actually, mastery does *not* make sense. It cannot be captured with words. It defies analysis. Mastery cannot be taught. It can only be learned and experienced.

By design, you are a learning machine. As an infant, you learned to walk. As a toddler, you learned to talk. By the time you reached age 5, you'd mastered many skills needed to thrive in the world. And you learned all these things without formal instruction, without lectures, without books, without conscious effort, and without fear. You can rediscover that natural learner within you. Each chapter of this book is about a step you can take on this path.

Master students share certain qualities. These are attitudes and core values. Although they imply various strategies for learning, they ultimately go beyond what you do. Master student qualities are ways of *being* exceptional.

Following is a list of master student qualities. Remember that the list is not complete. It merely points in a direction. As you read, look to yourself. Put a check mark next to each quality that you've already demonstrated. Put another mark, say an exclamation point, next to each quality you want to actively work on possessing. This is not a test. It is simply a chance to celebrate what you've accomplished so far—and start thinking about what's possible for your future.

- ☐ **Inquisitive.** The master student is curious about everything. By posing questions, they can generate interest in the most mundane, humdrum situations. When they are bored during a biology lecture, they

thinks to themselves, “I always get bored when I listen to this instructor. Why is that? Maybe it’s because he reminds me of my boring Uncle Ralph, who always tells those endless fishing stories. He even looks like Uncle Ralph. Amazing! Boredom is certainly interesting.” Then they ask themselves, “What can I do to get value out of this lecture, even though it seems boring?” And they find an answer.

- ☐ **Able to focus attention.** Watch a 2-year-old at play. Pay attention to their eyes. The wide-eyed look reveals an energy and a capacity for amazement that keep their attention absolutely focused in the here and now. The master student’s focused attention has a childlike quality. The world, to a child, is always new. Because the master student can focus attention, to them the world is always new too.
- ☐ **Willing to change.** The unknown does not frighten the master student. In fact, they welcome it—even the unknown in themselves. We all have pictures of who we think we are, and these pictures can be useful. But they also can prevent learning and growth. The master student embraces new ideas and new strategies for success.
- ☐ **Able to organize and sort.** The master student can take a large body of information and sift through it to discover relationships. They can play with information, organizing data by size, color, function, timeliness, and hundreds of other categories. They have the guts to set big goals—and the precision to plan carefully so that those goals can be achieved.
- ☐ **Competent.** Mastery of skills is important to the master student. When they learn mathematical formulas, they study them until they become second nature. They practice until they know them cold—then put in a few extra minutes. They also are able to apply what they learn to new and different situations.
- ☐ **Joyful.** More often than not, the master student is seen with a smile on their face—sometimes a smile at nothing in particular

other than amazement at the world and their experience of it.

- ☐ **Able to suspend judgment.** The master student has opinions and positions, and they are able to let go of them when appropriate. They realize they are more than their thoughts. They can quiet their internal dialogue and listen to an opposing viewpoint. They don’t let judgment get in the way of learning. Rather than approaching discussions with a “Prove it to me and then I’ll believe it” attitude, they ask themselves, “What if this is true?” and explore possibilities.
- ☐ **Energetic.** Notice the master student with a spring in their step, the one who is enthusiastic and involved in class. When they read, they often sit on the very edge of their chair, and they play with the same intensity. They are determined and persistent.
- ☐ **Well.** Health is important to the master student, though not necessarily in the sense of being free of illness. Master students value their bodies and treat them with respect. They tend to emotional and spiritual health as well as physical health.
- ☐ **Self-aware.** Master students are willing to evaluate themselves and their behavior. They regularly tell the truth about their strengths and those aspects that could be improved.
- ☐ **Responsible.** There is a difference between responsibility and blame, and the master student knows it well. They are willing to take responsibility for everything in their life—even for events that most people would blame on others. For example, if a master student takes a required class that most students consider boring, they choose to take responsibility for their interest level. They look for ways to link the class to one of their goals and experiment with new study techniques that will enhance their performance in any course.
- ☐ **Willing to take risks.** The master student often takes on projects with no guarantee of success. They participate

in class dialogues at the risk of looking foolish. They tackle difficult subjects in term papers. They welcome the risk of a challenging course.

- ☐ **Willing to participate.** Don't look for the master student on the sidelines. The master student is a collaborator—a team player who can be counted on. They are engaged at school, at work, and with friends and family. They are willing to make a commitment and to follow through on it.
- ☐ **A generalist.** The master student is interested in everything around them. In the classroom, they are fully present. Outside the classroom, they actively seek out ways to deepen learning—through study groups, campus events, student organizations, and team-based projects. Through such experiences, they develop a broad base of knowledge in many fields that can apply to their specialties.
- ☐ **Willing to accept paradox.** The word *paradox* comes from two Greek words, *para* (“beyond”) and *doxen* (“opinion”). A paradox is something that is beyond opinion—or, more accurately, something that seems contradictory or absurd and yet has meaning. For example, the master student can be committed to managing money and reaching financial goals. At the same time, they can be totally detached from money, knowing that their real worth is independent of how much money they have.
- ☐ **Courageous.** The master student admits fear and fully experiences it. For example, they will approach a tough exam as an opportunity to explore feelings of anxiety and tension related to the pressure to perform. They do not deny fear; they embrace it. If they don't understand something or make a mistake, they admit it. When they face a challenge and bump into limits, they ask for help. And they are just as willing to give help as to receive it.
- ☐ **Self-directed.** Rewards or punishments provided by others do not motivate the master student. The desire to learn comes from within, and their goals come from themselves. They compete like a star athlete—not to defeat other people but to push themselves to the next level of excellence.
- ☐ **Spontaneous.** The master student is truly in the here and now. They are able to respond to the moment in fresh, surprising, and unplanned ways.
- ☐ **Relaxed about grades.** Grades make the master student neither depressed nor euphoric. They recognize that sometimes grades are important. At the same time, grades are not the only reason they study. They do not measure their worth as a human being by the grades they receive.
- ☐ **“Tech” savvy.** A master student defines *technology* as any tool that's used to achieve a human purpose. From this point of view, computers become tools for deeper learning, higher productivity, and greater success. When faced with a task to accomplish, the master student chooses effectively from the latest options in hardware and software. They don't get overwhelmed with unfamiliar technology. Instead, they embrace learning about the new technology and finding ways to use it to help him succeed at the given task. They also know when to go “offline” and fully engage with his personal community of friends, family members, classmates, instructors, and coworkers.
- ☐ **Intuitive.** The master student has an inner sense that cannot be explained by logic alone. They trust their “gut instincts” as well as their mind.
- ☐ **Creative.** Where others see dull details and trivia, the master student sees opportunities to create. They can gather pieces of knowledge from a wide range of subjects and put them together in new ways. The master student is creative in every aspect of life.
- ☐ **Willing to be uncomfortable.** The master student does not place comfort first. When discomfort is necessary to reach a goal, they are willing to experience it. They can endure personal hardships and can look at unpleasant things with detachment.

- ☐ **Optimistic.** The master student sees setbacks as temporary and isolated, knowing that they can choose their response to any circumstance.
- ☐ **Willing to laugh.** The master student might laugh at any moment, and their sense of humor includes the ability to laugh at themselves. While going to school is a big investment with high stakes, you don't have to enroll in the deferred-fun program. A master student celebrates learning, and one of the best ways of doing that is to laugh.
- ☐ **Hungry.** Human beings begin life with a natural appetite for knowledge. In some people it soon gets dulled. The master student taps that hunger, and it gives them a desire to learn for the sake of learning.
- ☐ **Willing to work.** Once inspired, the master student is willing to follow through with sweat. They know that genius and creativity are the result of persistence and work. When in high gear, the master student works with the intensity of a child at play.
- ☐ **Caring.** A master student cares about knowledge and has a passion for ideas. They also care about people and appreciate learning from others. They collaborate on projects and thrive on teams. They flourish in a community that values win-win outcomes, cooperation, and love. ✖

practicing **CRITICAL THINKING**

2

The master student in you

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate to yourself that you truly are a master student.

Start by remembering a time in your life when you learned something well or demonstrated mastery. This experience does not have to relate to school. It might be a time when you aced a test, played a flawless soccer game, created a work of art that won recognition, or played a blazing guitar solo. It might be a time when you spoke from your heart in a way that moved someone else. Or it might be a time when you listened deeply to another person who was in pain, comforted them, and connected with them at a level beyond words.

Step 1

Describe the details of such an experience in your life. Include the place, time, and people involved. Describe what happened and how you felt about it.

Step 2

Now, review the article “Master Student qualities” and take a look at the master student qualities that you checked off. These are the qualities that apply to you. Give a brief example of how you demonstrated at least one of those qualities.

Step 3

Now think of other qualities of a master student—characteristics that were not mentioned in the article. List those qualities along with a one-sentence description of each.

The master student process— **DISCOVERY**

One way to become a better student is to grit your teeth and try harder. There is a better way—the master student process. The purpose of using this process is to develop the qualities of a master student.

You can use the master student process to learn about any subject, change your habits, and acquire new skills.

That is a large claim. If you're skeptical, that means you're already developing one quality of a master student—being inquisitive. Balance it with another quality—the ability to suspend judgment while considering a new idea.

First, get an overview of the master student process.

There are three phases:

- Discovery—observing your thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and current circumstances
- Intention—choosing new outcomes you'd like to create
- Action—following through on your intentions with new behaviors

As you experiment with the master student process, remember that there's nothing you need to take on faith. Experience it firsthand. Test the process in daily life. Then watch the results unfold.

Throughout this book, you'll see Journal Entries. These are suggestions for writing that guide you through the master student process.



Brian A. Jackson/Shutterstock.com

These Journal Entries include Discovery Statements. Their purpose is to help you gain awareness of “where you are”—your current thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Use Discovery Statements to describe your strengths and the aspects of your life that you'd like to change. The result is a running record of how you are learning and growing.

Sometimes Discovery Statements capture an “aha!” moment—a sudden flash of insight. Perhaps a new solution to an old problem suddenly occurs to you. Maybe a life-changing insight wells up from the deepest part of your mind. Don't let such moments disappear. Capture them in Discovery Statements.

To get the most value from Discovery Statements, keep the following guidelines in mind.

Record the specifics.

Thoughts include inner voices. We talk to ourselves constantly in our head. When internal chatter gets in the way, write down what you tell yourself. If this seems difficult at first, just start writing. The act of writing can trigger a flood of thoughts.

Thoughts also include mental pictures. These are especially powerful. Picturing yourself flunking a test is like a rehearsal to do just that. One way to take away the power of negative images is to describe them in detail.

Also notice how you feel when you function well. Use Discovery Statements to

pinpoint exactly where and when you learn most effectively.

In addition, observe your emotions and actions, and record the facts. If you spent 90 minutes chatting online with a favorite cousin instead of reading your anatomy text, write about it. Include the details—when you did it, where you did it, and how it felt.

Use discomfort as a signal.

When you approach a hard task, such as a difficult math problem, notice your physical sensations. These might include a churning stomach, shallow breathing, and yawning. Feeling uncomfortable, bored, or tired can be a signal that you're about to do valuable

work. Stick with it. Write about it. Tell yourself you can handle the discomfort just a little bit longer. You will be rewarded with a new insight.

Suspend judgment. As you learn about yourself, be gentle. Suspend self-judgment. If you continually judge your behaviors as “bad” or “stupid,” your mind will quit making discoveries rather than put up with abuse. For your own benefit, be kind to yourself.

Tell the truth. Suspending judgment helps you tell the truth about yourself. “The truth will set you free” is a saying that endures for a reason. The closer you get to the truth, the

more powerful your Discovery Statements. And if you notice that you are avoiding the truth, don't blame yourself. Just tell the truth about it.

Save your Discovery Statements so that you can savor them later. Your Discovery Statements are a priceless record of what you're thinking, feeling, and doing. Don't lose this treasure. Collect all your Discovery Statements in a central place—anything from handwritten entries in a leather-bound journal to digital documents in a notes or writing application. Revisit your collected statements on a regular basis to witness the master student emerging in you. ✦

The master student process— **INTENTION**

Journal Entries also include Intention Statements. These are about your commitment to take action. Use Intention Statements to describe how you will change your thinking and behavior.



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In terms of the master student process, Intention Statements and Discovery Statements are linked.

Whereas Discovery Statements promote insights, Intention Statements are blueprints for action based on those insights.

The act of writing will focus your energy on specific tasks and help you aim at particular goals. Following are more ways to create Intention Statements that make a positive difference in your life.

Make intentions observable. Rather than writing “I will work harder on my history

assignments,” write, “I intend to review my class notes, and I intend to make summary sheets of my reading.” Then when you review your progress, you can actually tell whether you did what you intended to do.

Make intentions small and achievable. Give yourself the chance to succeed. Set goals that you can meet. Break large goals into small, specific tasks that can be accomplished quickly. If you want to get an A in biology, ask yourself, *What can I do today?* You might choose to talk to three classmates about forming a study group. Make that your intention.

Anticipate self-sabotage. Be aware of what you might do, consciously or unconsciously, to undermine your best intentions. If you intend to study differential equations at 9:00 p.m., notice when you sit down to watch a two-hour movie that starts at 8:00 p.m.

Be careful with intentions that depend on other people. If you intend for your study group to complete an assignment by Monday, then your success depends on the students in the group. However, you can support your group’s success by writing an Intention Statement about completing your part of the assignment.

Set timelines. Timelines can focus your attention. For example, if you are assigned a paper to write, break the assignment into small tasks and set a precise due date for each one. For example, you might write, *I will select a topic for my paper by 9 a.m. Wednesday.*

Timelines are especially useful when your intention is to experiment with a technique

suggested in this book. The sooner you act on a new idea, the better. Plan to practice a new behavior within 24 hours after you first learn about it.

Remember that you create timelines for your own benefit—not to feel guilty. And you can always adjust the timeline to allow for unplanned events.

Create reminders. Even the most carefully crafted intentions can fizzle when they’re forgotten. Move your Intention Statements to a place where you’re sure to see them again. If you intend to do something at a specific time or on a specific day, for example, then make a note in your calendar. Other intentions can go on your list of goals or daily to-do list. (For more about creating and using these tools, see the Time chapter.)

Reward yourself. When you carry out your intention on time, celebrate that fact. Remember that some rewards follow directly from your accomplishment. For example, one possible reward for earning your degree is a career that you enjoy.

Other rewards are more immediate and related to smaller tasks. When you turn in a paper on time, you could reward yourself with a movie or a long bike ride in the park.

In either case, rewards work best when you are willing to withhold them. If you plan to take a nap on Sunday afternoon whether or not you complete a reading assignment, then the nap is not an effective reward.

Another way to reward yourself is to sit quietly after finishing a task and savor the feeling. One reason that success breeds success is that it feels good. ■

Be on the lookout

Be on the lookout for the Journal Entries throughout this text. They are prompts to write Discovery and Intention Statements. Also remember that you can invent your own Discovery and Intention Statements. Fire up the Master Student Process at any time, watching the results unfold as you move from ideas to action.



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The master student process— **ACTION**

Here's the deal: Life responds to what you *do*. The action phase of the master student process is where you jump “off the page” and into your life. This is where the magic happens.

A well-written Discovery Statement can move you to tears. A carefully crafted Intention Statement can fill you with inspiration. And if they fail to change your behavior, both kinds of Journal Entries can be forgotten.

There's an old saying: If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. It seems so obvious: Getting new results calls for new behaviors. And yet this simple idea is easy to forget or resist.

Successful people consistently produce the results that they want. And they are flexible enough to adjust their strategies based on feedback.

As you move into action, welcome discomfort, your old friend. Changing your behavior might lead to yucky feelings. Instead of going back to your old behaviors, befriend those feelings. Taking action has a way of dissolving discomfort. The following ideas can also help.

Discover the joy of “baby steps.” Even simple changes

in behavior can produce results. If you feel like procrastinating, then tackle just one small, specific task related to your intention. Find something you can complete in five minutes or less, and do it *now*. For example, access just one website related to the topic of your next assigned paper. Spend just three minutes previewing a reading assignment. Taking tiny steps like these can move you into action with grace and ease.

If you're unsure about what to do, then tweak your intentions. Make sure that your Intention Statements include specific behaviors. Describe what you'll actually *do*—the kind of physical actions that would show up on a video recording. Get your legs, arms, and mouth moving.

When you get stuck, tell the truth about it. As you become a student of human behavior, you'll see people expecting new results from old behaviors—and then wondering why they feel stuck. Again, don't be surprised if you discover this tendency in yourself. Just tell the truth about it, review your

intentions, and take your next action.

Look for prompts to action throughout this book. In addition to Journal Entries, you'll see Practicing Critical Thinking exercises scattered throughout *Becoming a Master Student*. These are suggestions for taking specific actions based on the ideas in the text. To get the most out of this book, do the exercises.

Remember that it's not about self-improvement. If you walk into a bookstore or browse an online bookseller, you might notice titles that are listed under a category called “self-improvement.” *Becoming a Master Student* is not a “self-improvement” book. It's based on the idea that you already *are* a master student. All that's needed is a process to unlock what's already present within you.

Actually, this is a *self-experimenting* book. It's about defining what matters to you and using those values to guide your behavior. There's nothing mysterious or “New Age” about it. Just discover what works for you. Then do it. ■

Keep the process ALIVE

The first edition of this book began with a memorable sentence: *This book is worthless.* Many students thought that this was a trick to get their attention. It wasn't.

Others thought it was “reverse psychology.” It wasn't that either.

What was true of that first edition is true of this one as well: This book is worthless *if reading it is all you do.*

When you consistently move through the master student process—from discovery to intention and all the way to action—prepare for a different outcome. Practicing the process is what keeps it alive.

Think about the process as flying a plane.

Airplanes are seldom exactly on course. Human and automatic pilots are always checking an airplane's positions and making corrections. The resulting path looks like a zigzag. The plane is almost always flying in the wrong direction. Yet through constant observation and course correction, it flies to the planned destination.

That's how the master student process works. Discovery Statements call for constant



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observation. Intention Statements call for course correction. And moving into action keeps you on course, headed in your desired direction.

By the way, straying off course is normal. Don't panic when you forget a Discovery Statement or fail to complete an intended task. Simply make the necessary corrections.

Work smarter, not harder. Sometimes—and especially in college—learning *does* take effort. As you become a master student, you can learn many ways to get the most out of that effort.

Though the following statement might strike you as improbable, you may well discover that it's true: It can take the same amount of energy to get what you *don't* want in school as it takes to get what you *do* want. Sometimes getting what you don't want takes even more effort.

The secret of student success

Okay, we're done kidding around. It's time to reveal the secret of student success.

(Provide your own drum roll here.)

The secret is...

... *there are no secrets.*

The strategies that successful students use are well-known. You have hundreds of them at your fingertips right now, in this book.

Use those strategies. Modify them. Invent new ones. With the master student process, you become the authority on what works for you.

What makes any strategy work is discovery, intention, and action. Without them, the pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are just expensive mulch or digital detritus.

Add your participation and these pages become priceless.

An airplane burns the same amount of fuel flying away from its destination as it does flying toward it. It pays to stay on course.

Take a path to self-actualization. Abraham Maslow is an important figure in the history of psychology. One of his most memorable discoveries is that we are meant to do more than just satisfy our basic needs for physical safety and survival. We also need to:

- Love and be loved.
- Experience accomplishment and self-esteem.
- Fully develop our unique talents.
- Go beyond self-centeredness and find fulfillment in contributing to other people.

When we are meeting this full range of needs, we are self-actualizing.¹

Maslow's ideas are a major inspiration for this book. One goal of the **master student process** is to put you on a path to self-actualizing. As you gain experience with

writing Discovery and Intention Statements, you'll learn to think more critically and creatively. And as you move into action, you'll learn to overcome procrastination and manage your behaviors in the midst of constantly changing moods. Each time that you increase your skill in the master student process, you move higher up the hierarchy of needs.

See the process as a lifelong adventure. Remember that this book is big for a reason. There are far more ideas in this book than you can possibly put into action during a single term.

This is not a mistake. In fact, it is quite intentional. There are many ideas in this book because no one expects all of them to work for you. If one technique fizzles out, you have dozens more to choose from.

Consider the first word in the title of this book—*becoming*. This word implies that mastery is not an end state or final goal. Rather, mastery is a path to walk for the rest of your life. ✦

Get the most from THIS BOOK

GET USED TO A NEW LOOK AND TONE

This book looks different from traditional textbooks. *Becoming a Master Student* presents major ideas in magazine-style articles. There are lots of lists, blurbs, one-liners, pictures, charts, graphs, illustrations, and even a joke or two.

SKIP AROUND

Feel free to use this book in several different ways. Read

it straight through. Or pick it up, turn to any page, and find an idea you can use right now. You might find that this book presents similar ideas in several places. This repetition is intentional. Repetition reinforces key points. A technique that works in one area of your life might work in others as well.

USE WHAT WORKS

If there are sections of this book that don't apply to you at all,

skip them—unless, of course, they are assigned. In that case, see whether you can gain value from those sections anyway. When you commit to get value from this book, even an idea that seems irrelevant or ineffective at first can turn out to be a powerful tool in the future. If it works, use it. If it doesn't, lose it.

RIP 'EM OUT

The printed pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are



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MOTIVATION—

I'm just not in the mood

Do you ever describe yourself as low on motivation?
What are the signs and how do you respond?

In large part, this chapter is about your motivation to succeed in school. There are at least two ways to think about motivation. One is that the terms *self-discipline*, *willpower*, and *motivation* describe something missing in ourselves. We use these words to explain another person's success or our own shortcomings: "If I were more motivated, I'd get more involved in school." "Of course she got an A. She has self-discipline." "If I had more willpower, I'd lose weight." It seems that certain people are born with lots of motivation, whereas others miss out on it.

A second approach to thinking about motivation is to stop assuming that motivation is mysterious, determined at birth, or hard to come by. Perhaps there's nothing missing in you. Consider that you can approach a "lack of motivation" simply as a temporary problem that has a variety of solutions. Instead of thinking about personal shortcomings, experiment with the following suggestions.

Befriend your discomfort.

The mere thought of reading a chapter in a statistics book or proofreading a paper can lead

to discomfort. In the face of such discomfort, you can procrastinate. Or you explore this barrier on the way to getting the job done.

Begin by investigating the discomfort. Notice the thoughts running through your head, and speak them out loud: "That is the last thing I want to do right now." "I'd rather walk on a bed of hot coals than do this."

Also observe what's happening with your body. For example, are you breathing faster or slower than usual? Are your shoulders tight? Do you feel any tension in your stomach?

Once you're in contact with your mind and body, stay with the discomfort a few minutes longer. Don't judge it as good or bad. Accepting the thoughts and body sensations robs them of power.

Separate feelings from behavior.

What we call motivation could be something that you already possess—the ability to take action even when you don't *feel* like doing anything. If you reflect on this idea for a minute, you will discover that *you've already demonstrated this ability on many occasions*. Recall the

times when you did laundry, washed dishes, cleaned your apartment, or tackled some other chore despite the urge to procrastinate. You probably didn't find the task to be fun. And yet you completed it anyway.

The fact is that you don't have to feel motivated *before* moving into action. Befriend your discomfort as described above and then dive right in to the task you've been putting off. Instead of waiting to feel motivated, just get started. Notice what happens to your "need" for motivation.

Remember the nature of motivation—and use it to your advantage. Motivation is fickle and hard to predict. It changes from day to day and even hour to hour. This is not a problem, however. In fact, it's normal.

You can even use the ever-changing nature of motivation to your benefit. Schedule challenging tasks, such as exercising or reading technical books, for times during the day when your energy typically peaks. Save easier tasks for times when your energy decreases.



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Also take advantage of peak energy times to set the stage for future success. For example, go through your kitchen and throw away any junk food that you find. Plan some new meals and make a shopping list for the ingredients. Chop up fruits and vegetables and put them in serving-size containers that you can easily take out of the refrigerator. On days when you feel tired and have no idea what to make for dinner, you'll already have the hard work done.

Promise it. Motivation can come simply from being clear about your goals and the very next action you will take to meet them. Say that you want to start a study group. Commit yourself to inviting specific people and setting a time and place to meet. Promise your classmates that you'll do this, and ask them to hold you accountable. Self-discipline, willpower, motivation—none of these mysterious characteristics has to get in your way. Just make a promise, clarify your intention, and keep your word.

Change your mind—and your body. You can also get past discomfort by planting new thoughts in your mind or changing your physical stance. For example, instead of slumping in a chair, sit up straight or stand up. Get physically active by taking a short walk. Notice what happens to your discomfort.

Work with your thoughts also. Replace “I can’t stand this”

with “I’ll feel great when this is done” or “Doing this will help me get something I want.”

Sweeten the task. Sometimes it’s just one aspect of a task that holds you back. You can stop procrastinating merely by changing that aspect. If distaste for your physical environment keeps you from studying, you can change that environment. Reading about social psychology might seem like a yawner when you’re alone in a dark corner of the house. Moving to a cheery, well-lit library can sweeten the task.

When you’re done with an important task, reward yourself for a job well done. The simplest rewards—such as a walk, a hot bath, or a favorite snack—can be the most effective.

Talk about how bad it is. One way to get past negative attitudes is to take them to an extreme. When faced with an unpleasant task, launch into a no-holds-barred gripe session. Pull out all the stops: “There’s no way I can start my income taxes now. This is terrible beyond words—an absolute disaster. This is a catastrophe of global proportions!” Gripping taken this far can restore perspective. It shows how self-talk can turn inconveniences into crises.

Turn up the pressure. Sometimes motivation is a luxury. Pretend that the due date for your project has been moved up one month, one week, or one day. Raising the stress level slightly can spur you into action. Then the issue of motivation seems beside the point, and meeting the due date moves to the forefront.

Turn down the pressure.

The mere thought of starting a huge task can induce anxiety. To get past this feeling, turn down the pressure by taking “baby steps.” Divide a large project into small tasks. In 20 minutes or less, you could preview a book, create a rough outline for a paper, or solve two or three math problems. Careful planning can help you discover many such steps to make a big job doable.

Ask for support. Other people can become your allies in overcoming procrastination. For example, form a support group and declare what you intend to accomplish before each meeting. Then ask members to hold you accountable. If you want to begin exercising regularly, ask another person to walk with you three times weekly. People in support groups ranging from Alcoholics Anonymous to Weight Watchers know the power of this strategy.

Adopt a model. One strategy for succeeding at any task is to hang around the masters. Find someone you consider successful, and spend time with that person. Observe this person and use them as a model for your own behavior. You can “try on” this person’s actions and attitudes. Look for tools that feel right for you. This person can become a mentor for you.

Compare the payoffs to the costs. All behaviors have payoffs and costs. Even unwanted behaviors such as cramming for exams or neglecting exercise have payoffs. Cramming might give you more time that’s free of commitments. Neglecting exercise can give you more time to sleep.

One way to let go of such unwanted behaviors is first to openly acknowledge the payoffs. This can be especially powerful when you follow it up with the next step—determining the costs. For example, skipping a reading assignment can give you time to go to the movies. However, you might be unprepared for class and have twice as much to read the following week.

Maybe there is another way to get the payoff (going to the movies) without paying the cost (skipping the reading assignment). With some thoughtful weekly planning, you might choose to give up a few hours of television and end up with enough time to

read the assignment *and* go to the movies.

Comparing the costs and benefits of any behavior can fuel our motivation. We can choose new behaviors because they align with what we want most.

Do it later. Sometimes it's wise to save a task for later. For example, writing a résumé can wait until you've taken the time to analyze your job skills and map out your career goals. Putting it off does not show a lack of motivation—it shows planning.

When you do choose to do a task later, turn this decision into a promise. Estimate how long the task will take, and

schedule a specific date and time for it on your calendar.

Heed the message. Sometimes lack of motivation carries a message that's worth heeding. An example is the student who majors in accounting but seizes every chance to be with children. His chronic reluctance to read accounting textbooks might not be a problem. Instead, it might reveal his desire to major in elementary education. His original career choice might have come from the belief that "real men don't teach kindergarten." In such cases, an apparent lack of motivation signals a deeper wisdom trying to get through. ✱



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Ways to change a HABIT

Consider a new way to think about the word *habit*. Imagine for a moment that many of our most troublesome problems and even our most basic traits are just habits.

The expanding waistline that your friend blames on their spouse's cooking—maybe that's just a habit called overeating.

The fit of rage that a student blames on a teacher—maybe that's just the student's habit of closing the door to new ideas.

Procrastination, stress, and money shortages might just be names that we give to collections of habits—scores of simple,



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small, repeated behaviors that combine to create a huge result. The same goes for health, wealth, love, and many of the other things that we want from life.

One way of thinking about success or failure is to focus on habits. Behaviors such as failing to complete reading assignments or skipping class might be habits leading to outcomes that “could not” be avoided, including dropping out of school. In the same way, behaviors such as completing assignments and attending class might lead to the outcome of getting an A.

When you discover a behavior that undermines your goals or creates a circumstance that you don’t want, consider a new attitude: *That behavior is just a habit. And it can be changed.*

Thinking about yourself as a creature of habit gives you power. Then you are not faced with the monumental task of changing your very nature. Rather, you can take on the doable job of changing your habits. Even a change in behavior that seems small can have positive effects that ripple throughout your life. Following are ways to move successfully through the stages of habit change.

GET PAST THE MYTHS ABOUT HABIT CHANGE

If you search the Internet for information about habit change, you’re likely to find advice such as:

- Changing habits calls for high levels of motivation and willpower.
- Changing a harmful habit such as smoking means getting a lot of information about how the behavior will harm you.
- You’re more likely to succeed if you change only one habit at a time.
- Keeping daily records of your behavior will help you change habits.
- It takes 21 days to change a habit.

These statements all have one thing in common: They are myths. None of them is supported by evidence.

Fortunately there *are* evidenced-based strategies for behavior change. And none of them depend on motivation, willpower, daily records, limiting yourself to one change at a time, or arbitrary schedules.

CREATE IMPLEMENTATION INTENTIONS

Psychologist Peter M. Gollwitzer developed the theory and practice of *implementation intentions* as a tool for habit change.³ Implementation intentions specify the *context* in which a planned behavior will occur. They are stated in a “if-then” format—context first, behavior second. Some examples that Gollwitzer gives are:

- If it is 5:00 p.m. on Monday, then I will jog home from work.
- If it is Saturday at 10:00 a.m., then I will select five low-fat dishes from my cookbook to make during the week.
- If I start to think about my favorite snack, then I will immediately ignore that thought.
- If I have walked up one flight of stairs and see the elevator, then I will tell myself “I can do it! I can take the stairs all the way up to my office.”
- If my heart starts to race, then I will start my breathing exercise.

Implementation intentions are designed to overcome two big problems with changing our behavior. One is simply *getting started*. We can frame the most beautiful intention in the world—and then forget to act on it. Or, we might have second thoughts about the intention at a critical moment and miss an opportune moment to act.

The other challenge is *sustaining* a planned behavior. Here the obstacles are getting distracted and reverting to existing habits, especially when we feel distress or other negative emotions.

Implementation intentions can solve both problems. To get the most benefit from this strategy:

- Tailor your intentions to the specific challenges that you face—starting a new behavior, sustaining it, or both.
- State contexts (the “if” part your intention) and behaviors with details about exactly

what you will do, *where* you will do it, and *when*.

- Choose a context that you're sure to encounter.
- Plan a behavior that you can actually *do* in that context.
- Make sure that each context cues only *one* planned behavior.
- Make sure that your values, goals, and intentions are all aligned.

DESIGN TINY HABITS

Stanford psychologist B. J. Fogg emphasizes the power of “baby steps.”⁴ The key is to plan simple behavior changes that require no special ability—things that you can do even when you feel no motivation whatsoever.

The Tiny Habits® method has four steps. First, choose a behavior that:

- You will do at least once a day
- Takes less than 30 seconds
- Requires little effort
- You already *want* to do
- You already *can* do

Say that you want to develop a daily meditation habit. Many meditation teachers will tell you to sit first thing in the morning for at least 30 minutes. Commitments such as that are too hard for many people and often fail, says Fogg. Instead, plan to take just *one* mindful breath.

If you think that this sounds silly, then consider a finding from the experience of thousands of people who took Fogg's free Tiny Habits course (tinyhabits.com): Over time, success with a tiny behavior change naturally expands that behavior. Flossing just one

tooth after you brush your teeth, for instance, creates a pathway to eventually flossing *all* your teeth.

Second, choose an *anchor*, or prompt, for your tiny behavior. The best anchor is one of your existing habits or another event that occurs every day. Examples include:

- Getting out of bed in the morning
- Brushing your teeth
- Using the bathroom
- Making coffee
- Pouring your first cup of coffee
- Starting the dishwasher
- Answering the phone
- Getting into bed at night

Third, put your anchor and behavior in writing using an *After I... I will...* format: *After I start coffee, I will sit for one mindful breath.* Fogg calls this a Tiny Habit “recipe.” More examples include:

- After I brush my teeth, I will floss one tooth.
- After I walk into my house after work, I will get out my workout clothes.
- After I start the shower, I will do two push ups.
- After I pour my morning coffee, I will text my mom.
- After I turn out the lights, I will kiss my partner.
- After I arrive home, I will kiss my baby.
- After my feet first touch the floor in the morning, I will say “It's going to be a great day.”
- After I get on the bus, I will open my workbook.
- After I start the dishwasher, I will read one sentence from a book.

Fourth, celebrate every time you do the behavior. Your

celebration doesn't have to be dramatic. It just needs to be consistent and authentic. One option is to say something to yourself such as:

- Victory!
- Success!
- I did it!
- This is working.
- I am awesome.

Fogg recommends designing three Tiny Habits at a time. He also suggests that you mentally rehearse each habit five to eight times before actually doing it for the first time. Just visualize yourself encountering each anchor and doing the corresponding behavior. Follow up by celebrating.

Be sure choose behaviors that you actually *want* to do. Avoid “shoulds”—behaviors that you feel obligated to do, or that simply sound like they might be a good idea. And be sure avoid any behavior that triggers pain or negative emotions.

In addition, steer clear of behaviors that need to be timed, such as reading for 30 seconds. Instead of keeping your eyes on a timer, give 100 percent of your attention to actually doing the new behavior.

Above all, remember that behavior change is a learned skill. It takes practice, and failure is part of the process. People often start with behaviors that are vaguely defined and too hard. Writing habit recipes that describe truly tiny and precise behaviors calls for serious editing. In addition, pairing new behaviors with effective anchors involves a learning curve, as does finding celebration methods that work for you.

Be patient and persist. Keep revising your Tiny Habits recipes until you find combinations of anchors, behaviors, and celebrations that actually work for you.

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Consider the student who always snacks when studying. Each time the student sits down to read, they position a bag of potato chips within easy reach. For this student, opening a book is a cue to start chewing. Snacking is especially easy, given the

place the student chooses to study—the kitchen.

This student decides to change this habit by studying at a desk in the bedroom instead of at the kitchen table. And every time they feel the urge to bite into a potato chip, they drink from a glass of water that's been placed nearby.

You can use this strategy to support your implementation intentions and Tiny Habits. Just set up your environment so that the undesired behaviors become harder—and desired behaviors become easier.

If you want to stop snacking on junk foods, for example, then throw them in the garbage. If you want to drink less alcohol at home, then store the bottles in an out-of-the way closet. And if you want to develop a daily habit of doing yoga, then lay out a mat in your bedroom and leave it there.

Again, the beauty of this strategy is that it doesn't depend on motivation, special ability, or willpower. Going beyond those concepts opens up new options for success in changing any habit. ✎

DISCOVERY/INTENTION STATEMENT

journal entry 1

Declare what you want

Review the articles that you've read so far in this chapter. Then use this Journal Entry to start experiencing the master student process—the ongoing cycle of discovery, intention, and action.

Brainstorm many possible ways to complete this sentence: *I discovered that what I want most from my education is...* When you're done, choose the ending that feels best to you and write it down.

I discovered that what I want most from my education is...

Next, plan to move from discovery to action by describing one thing you will do in the next 24 hours to get what you want.

I intend to...

do you have a MINUTE?

Sometimes the hardest part of meeting a goal or changing a habit is simply getting started. To get past this obstacle, take a “baby step” right away. In 60 seconds or less, you can often do something right away that takes you in your desired direction.

Review the following chart for examples. Then plan a few baby steps of your own.

If you want to . . .	Then take a minute to . . .
Exercise every day right after getting up in the morning.	Lay out your exercise clothes and shoes the night before.
Spend less time on email.	Unsubscribe from email lists that no longer interest you.
Capture important ideas as soon as they occur to you.	Grab a few 3 × 5 cards and a pen to stick in a pocket or purse. Or, download a note-taking app for your smartphone.
Clean out that pile of unopened mail on top of your desk.	Throw away the junk mail and stuff that you’ll never respond to.
Empty your email inbox.	Look for one email that you can respond to in 60 seconds and handle it now. Set up a separate folder for emails that require follow-up action. Set up a separate folder for “read later” emails that don’t require follow-up action.
Organize your desk.	Find a small metal tray, basket, or other container to temporarily store new pieces of mail, class handouts, notes to yourself, and other papers.
Organize your list of contacts.	Take one business card and enter the name, address, and phone number into the Contacts app on your computer, tablet, or smartphone.
Write more useful notes.	Take your notes from one of today’s classes and fix a sentence that’s unclear.
Communicate more effectively with instructors.	Write down three questions you’d like to ask one of your instructors during an office meeting.
Start reviewing for tests earlier.	Create physical or digital flashcards for your courses. Enter upcoming test dates in your calendar.
Get started on an assigned paper to write.	Make a list of three possible topics. Write one sentence that you might be able to include in the paper. Brainstorm three questions about your topic.
Express gratitude to the key people in your life.	Send one person a short text with a specific thank-you.
Get financial aid.	Search your school’s website for the location, phone number, and email address of the financial aid office.
Reduce the amount of time that you spend sitting every day.	Stand up right now for two minutes. Stand up whenever you answer a phone call.
Manage stress more effectively.	Take 60 seconds to scan your body for any points of tension and relax those muscles.
Develop a career plan.	Go online to make an appointment with your school’s career center to find out more about the resources that are available to you.
Protect your privacy when you go online.	Create a new password that’s stronger than one of your current passwords. Bookmark a search engine with built-in privacy features, such as Epic Search (epicsearch.in) and DuckDuckGo (duckduckgo.com).

Plan to change a habit

In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explains that any habit has three elements:⁵

- **Routine.** This is a behavior that we repeat, usually without thinking. Examples are taking a second helping at dinner, biting fingernails, or automatically hitting the “snooze” button when the alarm goes off in the morning.
- **Cue.** Also known as a *trigger*, this is an event that occurs right before we perform the routine. It might be an internal event, such as a change in mood. Or it could be an external event, such as seeing an advertisement that triggers food cravings.
- **Reward.** This is the payoff for the routine—usually a feeling of pleasure or a reduction in stress.

Taken together, these elements form a habit loop: You perceive a *cue* and then perform a *routine* in order to get a *reward*. Use this Practicing Critical Thinking exercise to test Duhigg’s ideas for yourself.

Step 1: Identify your current routine.

Describe the habit that you want to change. Refer to a specific behavior that anyone could observe—preferably a physical, visible action that you perform every day.

I discovered that the habit I want to change is ...

Step 2: Identify the cue.

Next, think about what takes place immediately before you perform the routine. For instance, drinking a cup of coffee (cue) might trigger the urge to eat a cookie (routine).

I discovered that the cue for the behavior I described is ...

Step 3: Identify the reward.

Now for the “goodie.” Reflect on the reward you get from your routine. Do you gain a distraction from discomfort? A pleasant sensation in your body? A chance to socialize with friends or coworkers? Describe the details.

I discovered that my reward for my current routine is ...

Step 4: Choose a new routine.

Now choose a different routine that you can perform in response to the cue. The challenge is to choose a behavior that offers a reward with as few disadvantages as possible. Instead of eating a whole cookie, for example, you could break off just one small section and eat it slowly, with full attention. This would allow you to experience a familiar pleasure with a fraction of the calories. Describe your new routine.

The new routine that I intend to do is ...

Step 5: Create a visual summary of your experience with habit change.

After practicing your new routine for at least 7 days, fill in the following chart to summarize what you did. Use the *Notes* column to describe what you learned, including anything that surprised you, consequences of the new routine, and things that will be useful to remember when you plan habit changes in the future.

Current Routine	Cue	Reward	New Routine	Notes

Choosing your purpose

Success is a choice—your choice. To *get* what you want, it helps to *know* what you want. That is the purpose of this two-part Journal Entry.

You can begin choosing success by completing this Journal Entry right now. If you choose to do it later, then plan a date, time, and place and then block out the time on your calendar.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Part 1

Select a time and place when you know you will not be disturbed for at least 20 minutes. (The library is a good place to do this exercise.) Relax for two or three minutes, clearing your mind. Next, complete the following sentences—and then keep writing.

When you run out of things to write, stick with it just a bit longer. Be willing to experience a little discomfort. Keep writing. What you discover might be well worth the extra effort.

What I want from my education is . . .

When I complete my education, I want to be able to . . .

I also want. . .

Part 2

After completing Part 1, take a short break. Reward yourself by doing something that you enjoy. Then come back to this Journal Entry.

Now, review the list you just created of things that you want from your education. You will find elements of both Discovery and Intention Statements there. See whether you can summarize them in one sentence that combines both elements of the master student process. Start this sentence with “My purpose for being in school is . . .”

Allow yourself to write many drafts of this mission statement, and review it periodically as you continue your education. With each draft, see whether you can capture the essence of what you want from higher education and from your life. State it in a vivid way—in a short sentence that you can easily memorize, one that sparks your enthusiasm and makes you want to get up in the morning.

You might find it difficult to express your purpose statement in one sentence. If so, write a paragraph or more. Then look for the sentence that seems most charged with energy for you.

Following are some sample purpose statements:

- My purpose for being in school is to gain skills that I can use to contribute to others.
- My purpose for being in school is to live an abundant life that is filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.
- My purpose for being in school is to enjoy myself by making lasting friendships and following the lead of my interests.

Now, write at least one draft of your purpose statement.

Making the transition to HIGHER EDUCATION



You share one thing in common with other students at your school: Entering higher education represents a major change in your life. You've joined a new culture with its own set of rules—both spoken and unspoken.

Perhaps you've just graduated from high school. Or maybe you've been out of the classroom for decades. Either way, you'll discover big differences between secondary and post-secondary education. Many of those differences call for new skills in managing time.

Begin by taking a minute to relax and remember something: You don't have to do it all at once. To enter the culture of higher education, start by dealing with some common challenges. Then learn to manage time in ways that help you make a successful transition.

DEAL WITH COMMON CHALLENGES

The moment that you enter higher education, you're immediately faced with:

- **New academic standards.** Once you enter higher education, you'll probably

find yourself working harder in school than ever before. Instructors will often present more material at a faster pace. There probably will be fewer tests in higher education than in high school, and the grading might be tougher. Compared to high school, you'll have more to read, more to write, more problems to solve, and more to remember.

- **A new level of independence.** College instructors typically give less guidance about how or when to study. You may not get reminders about when assignments are due or when quizzes and tests will take place. Overall, you might receive less consistent feedback about how well you are doing in each of your courses.
- **Differences in teaching styles.** Instructors at colleges, universities, and vocational schools are often steeped in their subject matter. Many did not take courses on how to teach and might not be as interesting as some of your high school teachers.
- **A larger playing field.** The sheer size of your campus,

the variety of courses offered, the large number of departments can add up to a confusing array of options.

- **More students and more diversity.** The school you're attending right now might enroll hundreds or thousands more students than your high school. And the range of diversity among these students might surprise you.

Decrease the unknowns.

To reduce surprise, anticipate changes. Before classes begin, get a map of the school property and walk through your first day's schedule, perhaps with a classmate or friend. Visit your instructors in their offices and introduce yourself. Anything you can do to get familiar with the new routine will help. In addition, consider buying your textbooks before class begins. Scan them to get a preview of your courses.

Admit your feelings—whatever they are. Simply admitting the truth about how you feel—to yourself and to someone else—can help you cope. And you can almost

always do something constructive in the present moment, no matter how you feel.

If your feelings about this transition make it hard for you to carry out the activities of daily life—going to class, working, studying, and relating to people—then get professional help. Start with a counselor at the student health service on your campus. The mere act of seeking help can make a difference.

Allow time for transition.

You don't have to master the transition to higher education right away. Give it some time. Also, plan your academic schedule with your needs for transition in mind. Balance time-intensive courses with others that don't make as many demands.

Find and use resources.

For example, visit the career planning center and financial aid office. Check out tutoring services and computer labs. Check the schedule for on-campus concerts, films, and plays. Extracurricular activities include athletics, fraternities, sororities, student newspapers, debate teams, service-learning projects, internships, student government, and political action groups, to name just a few. Check your school's website for more.

Accessing resources is especially important if you are the first person in your family to enter higher education. As a first-generation student, you are having experiences that people in your family may not understand. Talk to your relatives about your activities at school. If they ask how they can help you, give

specific answers. Also, ask your instructors about programs for first-generation students on your campus.

Take the initiative in

meeting new people. Of all resources, people are the most important. You can isolate yourself, study hard, and get a good education. When you build relationships with teachers, staff members, fellow students, and employers, you can get a *great* education. Create a network of people who will personally support your success in school.

Introduce yourself to classmates and instructors. Just before or after class is a good time. Realize that most of the people in this new world of higher education are waiting to be welcomed. You can help them and help yourself at the same time. Connecting to school socially as well as academically promotes your success and your enjoyment.

Meet with your academic

advisor. One person in particular—your academic advisor—can help you access resources and make the transition to higher education. Meet with this person regularly. Advisors generally know about course requirements, options for declaring majors, and the resources available at your school. Peer advisors might also be available.

When you work with an advisor, remember that you're a paying customer and have a right to be satisfied with the service you get. Don't be afraid to change advisors when that seems appropriate.

Learn the language of

higher education. Terms such as *grade point average (GPA)*, *prerequisite*, *accreditation*, *matriculation*, *tenure*, and *syllabus* might be new to you. Ease your transition to higher education by checking your school catalog or school website for definitions of these words and others that you don't understand. Also ask your academic advisor for clarification.

MANAGE TIME WITH TRANSITION IN MIND

Devote study time to deep

processing. Stephen Chew, a professor of psychology at Samford University, reminds students that they can struggle in school even if they spend a lot of time studying. The goal, he says, is to make the most of study time. Study *smarter* rather than harder.

To do this, start with your mindset—the beliefs that shape your behaviors. Chew says that certain beliefs can undermine your success in school. Examples are:

- Smart people don't have to study much.
- It's okay to multitask.
- Mastery of a subject is based on talent rather than effort.⁶

In reality, students tend to *underestimate* how much time it takes to master a subject, even for "smart" people. Many students also *overestimate* how effective they are at multitasking, which leads to wasted study time. And they overlook the power of effort, which matters much more than talent or native intelligence.

The crucial factor for effective study time is something that Chew calls *deep processing*. This involves relating new information to what you already know, putting concepts into your own words, and creating mental images that make ideas easier to recall. In contrast, *shallow processing* is seeing a subject as a collection of isolated facts that you memorize without understanding or connection to your current knowledge.

One purpose of *Becoming a Master Student* is to help you move from shallow processing to deep processing. Each chapter of this book is loaded with suggestions for making this transition.

Ease into it. If you're new to higher education, consider easing into it. You can choose to attend school part-time before making a full-time commitment. If you've taken college-level classes in the past, find out if any of those credits will transfer into your current program.

Make time for class. In higher education, teachers generally don't take attendance. Yet you'll find that attending class is essential to your success. The amount that you pay in tuition and fees makes a powerful argument for going to classes regularly and getting your money's worth. In large part, the material that you're tested

on comes from events that take place in class.

Manage out-of-class time.

Instructors give you the raw materials for understanding a subject while a class meets. You then take those materials, combine them, and *teach yourself* outside of class.

To allow for this process, schedule two hours of study time for each hour that you spend in class. Also, get a calendar that covers the entire academic year. With the syllabus for each of your courses in hand, note key events for the entire term—dates for tests, papers, and other projects. Getting a big picture of your course load makes it easier to get assignments done on time and prevent all-night study sessions.

Plan ahead. By planning a week or month at a time, you get a bigger picture of your multiple roles as a student, an employee, and a family member. With that awareness, you can make conscious adjustments in the number of hours you devote to each domain of activity in your life. For example:

- If your responsibilities at work or home will be heavy in the near future, then register for fewer classes next term.
- Choose recreational activities carefully, focusing

on those that relax you and recharge you the most.

- Don't load your schedule with classes that require unusually heavy amounts of reading or writing.

"Publish" your schedule.

After you plan your study and class sessions for the week, write up your schedule and post it in a place where others who live with you will see it. If you use an online calendar, print out copies to put in your school binder or on your refrigerator door, bathroom mirror, or kitchen cupboard.

Enlist your employer's support.

If you're working while going to school, then let your employer in on your educational plans. Point out how the skills you gain in the classroom will help you meet work objectives. Offer informal seminars at work to share what you're learning in school. You might find that your company reimburses its employees for some tuition costs or even grants time off to attend classes.

Also find ways to get extra mileage out of your current tasks at work. Look for ways to relate your schoolwork to your job. For example, when you're assigned a research paper, choose a topic that relates to your current job tasks. Some schools even offer academic credit for work and life experience. ■

Succeeding as a **FIRST- GENERATION STUDENT**



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One lesson of American history is that people who are the first in their family to enter higher education can succeed. Think about the former slaves who enrolled in the country's first African-American colleges. Remember the ex-soldiers who used the GI Bill to earn advanced degrees. From their experiences, you can take some life-changing lessons about communicating with family members, friends, instructors, and fellow students.

ASK FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT

You don't have to go it alone. Your tuition buys access to many services—academic advising, dormitory advising, **career services**, financial aid, multicultural programs, tutoring, counseling, and more. Explore these sources of support. Also ask about specific programs for first-generation students.

Schedule a meeting with your academic advisor after every term. Share your successes and ask for help in solving problems.

The key is to ask for help right away. Do this as soon

as you feel stuck in class or confused about how to complete the next step in your education.

ASK FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Keep a list of every person who stands behind you—relatives, friends, instructors, advisors, and employers. Check in with them regularly via phone, email, and personal visits. Remind yourself that you are surrounded by people who want you to succeed.

RESOLVE CONFLICT WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

When you walked into your first class in higher education, you brought along the expectations of your family members. Those people might assume that you'll return home and be the same person you were last year.

The reality is that you will change while you're in school. Your attitudes, your friends, and your career goals may all shift. You might think that some of the people back home have limited ideas. In turn, they might criticize you.

This kind of conflict is normal in families with

first-generation students. Maintain your relationships with loved ones and give them time to understand your world. Talk about what you're learning and how it will help you succeed. Also apply the suggestions in this book for resolving conflict.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH INSTRUCTORS

Long-term relationships with your favorite instructors offer many benefits. Over the years, instructors can turn into mentors, colleagues, and even friends.

In particular, seek out instructors who were first-generation students. Ask them to put you in contact with other first-generation students and alumni. They can become part of your personal and professional networks.

When you have instructors that you like, stay in contact with them after their courses end. Visit these instructors during office hours at least once per term until you graduate. Talk about your current experiences and thank them for their contribution to your life. If you do well in their classes, ask instructors if they'd be willing

to write a recommendation for you in the future.

RESPOND TO PREJUDICE

Bias and discrimination can exist on any campus. Just ask students of color, **LBGTQIA** students, immigrants, and students from working-class or poor families. You might discover some common ground with all of them.

Remember that the law is on your side. Every school has anti-discrimination policies based on state and federal rules. Search your school's website to find out exactly what those policies are and who to contact if you experience discrimination.

In addition, speak up if someone makes a negative

comment or joke at your expense. Sometimes people have no idea how they affect you. Respond with I messages: "I realize that you don't mean to offend anybody, but I feel hurt and angry about what you just said." Or, "What you're saying is not accurate. It's based on a stereotype, not the facts about me."

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Return to your high school and talk to students about your experiences as a first-generation student. Invite students who are considering college to visit you on campus. Also thank the teachers and mentors who encouraged you to enter higher education.

Remember that you can contribute to other students simply by sharing how you got to higher education.

Did you grow up in a family that struggled to make ends meet financially? Then you know about how to live on a tight budget.

Did you work to support your family while you were in high school? Then you know about managing your time to balance major commitments.

Did you grow up in a neighborhood with people of many races, religions, and levels of income? Then you know about how to thrive with diversity.

Talking about your strengths can lead to a conversation that changes lives—including your own. ✧

Commitment

This book is worthless *unless* you actively participate in its activities and exercises.

One powerful way to begin taking action is to make a commitment. Conversely, if you don't make a commitment, then sustained action is unlikely. The result is a worthless book.

Therefore, in the interest of saving your valuable time and energy, this journal entry gives you a chance to declare your level of involvement upfront.

From the options that follow, choose the sentence that best reflects your commitment to using this book.

1. Well, I'm reading this book right now, aren't I?
2. I will skim the book and read the interesting parts.
3. I will read the book, think about it, and do the exercises that look interesting.
4. I will read the book, do some exercises, and complete some of the Journal Entries.
5. I will read the book, do some exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.
6. I will read the book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.
7. I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.
8. I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and experiment with many of the techniques in order to discover what works best for me.
9. I promise myself that I will create value from this course by studying this book, doing all the exercises and Journal Entries, and experimenting with most of the techniques.
10. I will use this book as if the quality of my education depended on it—doing all the exercises and Journal Entries, experimenting with most of the techniques, inventing techniques of my own, and planning to reread this book in the future.

For your Discovery Statement, enter the number of the sentence that reflects your commitment level and today's date:

Date _____ Commitment level _____

If you selected commitment level 1 or 2, you probably won't create a lot of value in this class. Consider passing this book on to a friend.

If your commitment level is 9 or 10, you are on your way to terrific success in school.

If your level is somewhere in between, then experiment with three suggestions from this chapter. Also set a date to return to this journal entry and consider raising your level of commitment based on the results of your experiment.

I intend to review this Journal Entry on . . .

Date _____ Commitment level _____



CAREER connection

Introduction

To create lasting value from this text—and from your entire experience in higher education—*adopt a skills perspective*. This means continually asking yourself:

- What do I want to be able to do *after* I graduate that I cannot do now?
- What courses and other experiences will help me learn to do those things?
- Am I making progress?

There is only one person who can answer these questions, and that person is you. Your instructors can't do it. Neither can your advisors, your employers, your peers, or your family. All of these people can give you useful feedback and suggestions. But only you can take action to close the gap between what you want to do and what you currently can do.

In the job market, what you offer employers, clients, and customers is a portfolio of related skills. And you can expand your skills over time. As a student in higher education, you get direct access to a network of people and resources for doing just that.

Think back to your purpose for being in school, the benefits you want to gain and the contribution to the world that you want to make. Skills are the nuts and bolts of your purpose—what you'll need to have that impact and make your purpose come alive.

Understanding two types of skills

When meeting with an academic advisor, you may be tempted to say, "I've just been taking general education and liberal arts courses. I don't have any marketable skills." Think again. It's important to remember that there are two major kinds of skills.

Work-content skills are acquired through formal schooling, on-the-job training, or both. For instance, the ability to repair fiber-optic cables or do brain surgery are considered work-content skills.

However, **transferable skills** are skills that we develop through experiences both inside and outside the classroom. These are abilities that help people thrive in any job—no matter what work-content skills they have. You start developing these skills long before you take your first job.

Perhaps you've heard someone described this way: "They're really smart and know what they're doing, but they have lousy people skills." People skills such as *listening* and *negotiating* are prime examples of transferable skills.

Making transferable skills visible

Transferable skills are often invisible to us. The problem begins when we assume that a given skill can be used in only one context, such as being in school or working at a particular job. Thinking in this way places an artificial limit on our possibilities.

As an alternative, think about the things you routinely do to succeed in school. Analyze your activities to isolate specific skills. Then brainstorm a list of jobs where you could use the same skills.

Consider the task of writing a research paper. This calls for the following skills:

- *Planning*, including setting goals for completing your outline, first draft, second draft, and final draft
- *Managing time* to meet your writing goals
- *Interviewing* people who know a lot about the topic of your paper
- *Researching* using the Internet and campus library to discover key facts and ideas to include in your paper
- *Writing* to present those facts and ideas in an original way
- *Editing* your drafts for clarity and correctness

Now consider the variety of jobs that draw on these skills.

For example, you could transfer your skill at writing papers to a possible career in journalism, technical writing, or advertising copywriting.

You could use your editing skills to work in the field of publishing as a magazine or book editor.

Interviewing and research skills could help you enter the field of market research. And the abilities to plan, manage time, and meet deadlines will help you succeed in all the jobs mentioned so far.

Use the same kind of analysis to think about transferring skills from one job to another. Say that you work part-time as an administrative assistant at a computer dealer that sells a variety of hardware and software applications. You take phone calls

from potential customers, help current customers solve problems using their computers, and attend meetings where your coworkers plan ways to market new products.

Now look at your job through the lens of transferable skills. You are developing skills at *selling*, *serving customers*, and *working on teams*. These skills could help you land a job as a sales representative for a computer manufacturer or software developer.

The basic idea is to take a cue from the word *transferable*. Almost any skill you use to succeed in one situation can *transfer* to success in another situation.

The concept of transferable skills creates a powerful link between higher education and the work world. Skills are the core elements of any job. While taking any course, list the specific skills you are developing and how you can transfer them to the work world.

If you consistently pursue this line of thought Almost everything you do in school can be applied to your career.

65 transferrable skills

As you read through the following list of transferable skills, notice how many of them are addressed in this book. Underline or highlight those that are most essential to the career that you want.

Self-Management Skills

1. Assessing your current knowledge and skills
2. Seeking out opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills
3. Choosing and applying learning strategies
4. Showing flexibility by adopting new attitudes and behaviors

Time Management Skills

5. Scheduling due dates for project outcomes
6. Scheduling time for goal-related tasks
7. Choosing technology and applying it to goal-related tasks
8. Choosing materials and facilities needed to meet goals
9. Designing other processes, procedures, or systems to meet goals
10. Working independently to meet goals
11. Planning projects for teams
12. Managing multiple projects at the same time
13. Monitoring progress toward goals
14. Persisting in order to meet goals
15. Delivering projects and outcomes on schedule

Memory Skills

16. Extracting key information from any source
17. Encoding that information in a way that makes it easier to recall later

Reading Skills

18. Reading for key ideas and major themes
19. Reading for detail
20. Reading to synthesize ideas and information from several sources
21. Reading to discover strategies for solving problems or meeting goals
22. Reading to understand and follow instructions

Note-Taking Skills

23. Taking notes on material presented verbally, in print, or online
24. Creating pictures, graphs, and other visuals to summarize and clarify information
25. Organizing information and ideas in digital and paper-based forms
26. Researching by finding information online or in the library
27. Gathering data through field research or working with primary sources

Test-Taking and Related Skills

- 28. Assessing personal performance at school or at work
- 29. Using test results and other assessments to improve performance
- 30. Managing stress

Thinking Skills

- 31. Thinking to create new ideas, products, or services
- 32. Thinking to evaluate ideas, products, or services
- 33. Evaluating material presented verbally, in print, or online
- 34. Thinking of ways to improve products, services, or programs
- 35. Choosing appropriate strategies for making decisions
- 36. Choosing ethical behaviors
- 37. Stating problems accurately
- 38. Diagnosing the sources of problems
- 39. Generating possible solutions to problems
- 40. Weighing benefits and costs of potential solutions
- 41. Choosing and implementing solutions
- 42. Interpreting information needed for problem solving or decision making

Communication Skills

- 43. Making presentations to promote a product or service
- 44. Making presentations to explain a concept or teach a skill
- 45. Technical writing
- 46. Copywriting to sell a product or service

- 47. Scriptwriting

- 48. Editing

Collaboration and Relationship Skills

- 49. Assigning and delegating tasks
- 50. Coaching
- 51. Consulting
- 52. Counseling
- 53. Giving people feedback about the quality of their performance
- 54. Interpreting and responding to nonverbal messages
- 55. Interviewing people
- 56. Leading meetings
- 57. Leading project teams
- 58. Working cooperatively in study groups and project teams
- 59. Preventing conflicts (defusing a tense situation)
- 60. Resolving conflicts

Money Skills

- 61. Monitoring income and expenses
- 62. Raising funds
- 63. Decreasing expenses
- 64. Estimating costs
- 65. Preparing budgets

This is only a partial list. To learn about more transferable skills and how they link to specific careers, check out the Skills Matcher at CareerOneStop from the U.S. Department of Labor (careeronestop.org).

DISCOVERY/INTENTION STATEMENT

journal entry 4

Begin developing transferable skills

Review the list of 65 transferable skills. Then complete the following sentences.

One transferable skill that I definitely want to acquire by the time I graduate is...

I'll know that I've developed this skill when I can...

To begin developing this skill immediately, I intend to...



Skynesher/E+/Getty Images

Discovering Yourself

why

Success starts with telling the truth about what *is* working—and what *isn't*—in your life right now.

how

Skim this chapter for three techniques that you'd like to use in school or in your personal life during the upcoming week. Make a note to yourself or mark the pages where the strategies that you intend to use are located in the chapter.

what if...

I could start to create new outcomes in my life by accepting the way I am right now?

what is included . . .

- 34** Power Process: Ideas are tools
- 35** First Step: Truth is a key to mastery
- 38** The Discovery Wheel
- 43** Discovering your learning styles
- 45** Learning from experience
- 46** Learning through your senses
- 49** Expanding your learning styles
- 53** Claim your multiple intelligences
- 57** The magic of metacognition
- 59** Master Student Profile: Joshua Williams
- 61** Career Connection

do you have a minute?

Take a minute to write down a “baby step”—a task that takes 60 seconds or less—that can help you move toward completing a current project or assignment. For example, brainstorm a list of topics for a paper that you plan to write.

If you can spare another minute, then do that task immediately.



Ideas are tools

There are many ideas in this book. When you first encounter them, don't believe any of them. Instead, think of the ideas as tools.

For example, you use a hammer for a purpose—to drive a nail. You don't try to figure out whether the hammer is “right.” You just use it. If it works, you use it again. If it doesn't work, you get a different hammer.

People have plenty of room in their lives for different kinds of hammers, but they tend to limit their openness to different kinds of ideas. A new idea, at some level, is a threat to their very being—unlike a new hammer, which is simply a new hammer.

Most of us have a built-in desire to be right. Our ideas, we often think, represent ourselves.

Some ideas are worth dying for. But please note: This book does not contain any of those ideas. The ideas on these pages are strictly “hammers.”

Imagine someone defending a hammer. Picture this person holding up a hammer and declaring, “I hold this hammer to be self-evident. Give me this hammer or give me death. Those other hammers are flawed. There are only two kinds of people

in this world: people who believe in this hammer and people who don't.”

That ridiculous picture makes a point. This book is not a manifesto. It's a toolbox, and tools are meant to be used.

If you read about a tool in this book that doesn't sound “right” or one that sounds a little goofy, remember that the ideas here are for using, not necessarily for believing. Suspend your judgment. Test the idea for yourself. If it works, use it. If it doesn't, don't use it.

Any tool—a hammer, a computer program, a study technique—is designed to do a specific job. A master mechanic carries a variety of tools because no single tool works for all jobs. If you throw a tool away because it doesn't work in one situation, you won't be able to pull it out later when it's just what you need. So if an idea doesn't work for you and you are satisfied that you gave it a fair chance, don't throw it away. File it away instead. The idea might come in handy soon.

And remember, this book is not about figuring out the “right” way. Even the “ideas are tools” approach is not “right.”

It's just a tool.

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FIRST STEP:

Truth is a key to mastery

The First Step is one of the most valuable tools in this book. It magnifies the power of all the other techniques. It is a key to becoming a master student.

The First Step technique is simple: Tell the truth about who you are and what you want. End of discussion. Now, proceed to the next chapter. Well... it's not *quite* that simple.

To succeed in school, tell the truth about what kind of student you are and what kind of student you want to become. Success starts with telling the truth about what *is* working—and what is *not* working—in your life right now.

An article about telling the truth might sound like pie-in-the-sky moralizing. However, there is nothing pie-in-the-sky or moralizing about a First Step. It is a practical, down-to-earth principle to use whenever you want to change your behavior.

When we acknowledge our strengths, we gain an accurate picture of what we can accomplish. When we admit that we have a problem, we are free to find a solution. Ignoring the truth, on the other hand, can lead to problems that stick around for decades.

FIRST STEPS ARE UNIVERSAL

When you see a doctor, the First Step is to tell the truth

about your current symptoms. That way you can get an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment plan. This principle is universal. It works for just about any problem in any area of life.

First Steps are used by millions of people who want to turn their lives around. No technique in this book has been field-tested more often or more successfully—or under tougher circumstances.

For example, members of Alcoholics Anonymous start by telling the truth about their drinking. Their First Step is to admit that they are powerless over alcohol. That's when their lives start to change.

When people join Weight Watchers, their First Step is telling the truth about how much they currently weigh.

When people go for credit counseling, their First Step is telling the truth about how much money they earn, how much they spend, and how much they owe.

People dealing with a variety of other challenges—including troubled relationships with food, drugs, sex, and work—also start by telling the truth. They use First Steps to change their behavior, and they do it for a reason: First Steps are effective.

FIRST STEPS ARE JUDGMENT-FREE

Let's be truthful: It's not easy to tell the truth about ourselves.

It's not fun to admit our weaknesses. Many of us approach a frank evaluation of ourselves about as enthusiastically as we'd greet a phone call from the bank about an overdrawn account. We might end up admitting that we're afraid of algebra, that we don't complete term papers on time, or that coming up with the money to pay for tuition is a constant challenge.

There is another way to think about self-evaluations. If we could see them as opportunities to solve problems and take charge of our lives, we might welcome them. Believe it or not, we can begin working with our list of weaknesses by celebrating them.

Consider the most accomplished, "together" people you know. If they were totally candid with you, they would talk about their mistakes and regrets as well as their rewards and recognition. The most successful people tend to be the most willing to look at their flaws.

It may seem natural to judge our own shortcomings and feel bad about them.