

Practicing College Learning Strategies



Practicing College Learning Strategies

Carolyn H. Hopper

Middle Tennessee State University



Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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Preface

Purposes and Goals for This Text

Having taught learning strategies for more than 30 years now, I can honestly say that not a semester has passed that I have not learned from my students. They are innovative, resilient, and want to be successful in college. Many need guidance in the strategies that will help them do their best and efficiently use the time they have. As a professor, writer, and researcher, I have written this text to share what I have learned about learning how to learn and strategies for being a successful student.

Practicing College Learning Strategies models the learning strategies that will give students the foundation for learning how to learn throughout college and becoming lifelong learners. The text and activities in Practicing College Learning Strategies, Seventh Edition, are thoughtfully constructed using brain-compatible strategies. Brain-compatible learning is based on how research in neuroscience suggests our brains naturally learn best. This focus encourages students to discover how they learn best, so they can bring that skill of learning to all of their other classes in college and to their life beyond.

By framing the text within the theme of "Being in the Driver's Seat," *Practicing College Learning Strategies* serves as a motivational tool, reminding students that they are in control of their learning. They must be the driver in their life in order to get where they want to go and succeed in college.

In the journey through college, students will discover that learning involves more than getting information. It involves examining new information, making it personal, and determining where it fits into their own experiences. It then requires converting comprehension into a plan or strategy and actively testing the strategy. Learning requires full participation and keeping eyes on the road. The Seventh Edition of *Practicing College Learning Strategies* models this learning process by clearly and concisely presenting the essential information students need to successfully navigate their way through their college education. Structured activities and practices will guide them in the reflection process to make the information personal and useful and provide practice in developing strategies for learning and in testing those strategies.

The straightforward, brief explanations and structured activities modeling the learning process make this text especially useful for first-time college students or returning adults. However, the brain-based academic orientation makes it valuable for anyone who wants to get the most out of his or her college journey.

I'm especially excited about the Seventh Edition's increased focus on skills students need to be successful. This introduction will help students (and instructors) clearly understand that they are not just learning about a topic, but are also discovering how it connects to the other strategies they have learned and will learn later in the text. This interconnectivity shows students the immediate relevance and importance of the strategies in their lives and will help motivate them to continue to learn. The body of each chapter provides practical application and practice of the strategies discussed to demonstrate how students can use them in their everyday lives. Finally, the chapter rounds out with a review section called Where Did We Go? that will help students systematically review and critically think about what they just learned and practiced.

Major Themes

There are two major themes that drive the Seventh Edition. Each theme has been integrated into the text to best help students learn and succeed in college.

Putting Students in the Driver's Seat

Take a minute to consider the following situations. How many of these can you relate to?

- Planning out your route carefully on a map before you get in your car
- Driving in an unfamiliar city with confusing signs
- Getting stuck in traffic on your way to an important meeting
- Unexpected road construction that forces you on a detour
- Carpooling with people you don't know

Now, think about these common issues that college students face:

- Choosing a major and the classes to take next semester
- Navigating around the college campus and finding where classes are
- Managing time in and outside the classroom
- Meeting new people and experiencing new things
- Managing stress and unexpected life events

See any similarities between the above lists? Brain research has found that one of the most powerful ways to learn is by using analogies. The analogy used throughout the Seventh Edition is that college is a journey or road trip and each student must be the driver if the student is to be successful. A passenger may come along for the ride, but the driver is in control and accepts responsibility. The driver does whatever is necessary in order to reach the destination: chooses the route, follows the road signs, steps on the gas and the brakes, fuels up, and asks for directions. The driver fights fatigue and stress and experiences the confusion of driving in an unfamiliar place. But the driver also owns the whole experience of the drive, every curve and bump and every complex intersection. We will use the driver analogy to think critically about student responsibilities in each chapter of the text.

Brain-Compatible Learning

In his book, *Human Brain and Human Learning* (1983), Leslie Hart argues that teaching without an awareness of how the brain learns is like

designing a glove with no sense of what a hand looks like—its shape, how it moves. Brain-compatible, or brain-based, learning is the central focus of the Seventh Edition of *Practicing College Learning Strategies*.

In keeping with the straightforward style of the text, the discussion of learning principles in Chapter 5 includes enough explanation of neurological research on memory to empower students. It provides them with a basic understanding of how to make maximum use of their memory and thereby improve their job performance, school achievement, and personal success. Students' idea of learning has often been limited to memorizing or comprehending a new concept.

The Seventh Edition continues to expand use of what James Zull calls "four essentials of learning." Students gather new information and analyze it, and many students think their learning is complete with the completion of these two steps. However, students must learn to go further and use this new information to form ideas and hypotheses. The learning process is not really complete until these ideas have actually have been tested in action.

Order and Content of Chapters

The order of all chapters in *Practicing College Learning Strategies* has been carefully vetted with reviewers and tested against current students.

The first four chapters of the Seventh Edition help students adjust to the new environment of college. These four chapters, Making A Smooth Transition to College, Practicing the Principles of Time Management, Practicing Critical Thinking, and Setting Goals are designed to get students familiar as quickly as possible with the key skills they'll need in order to succeed in the first few weeks of college.

Chapter 5, Learning Principles, is the core chapter on brain-compatible learning and introduces some basic functions of the brain so students understand not only what they need to do to aid memory, but also why the principles work. The ten learning principles introduced in this chapter act as a guide for students to begin the learning process and as a foundation for developing learning strategies that work.

Chapter 6, Processing Information from Lectures, and Chapter 7, Processing Information from Textbooks, both build on the learning principles in Chapter 5 by demonstrating how students need to use those principles in order to best develop strategies on how to process information from lectures and textbooks. With a focus on note taking and the Question in the Margin System, these two chapters provide students with the knowledge on how to process the information they'll need to succeed in college.

Learning styles are discussed in Chapter 8 to help students determine their preferences for learning. This chapter helps students determine their preferences in how they input, process, and respond to new information, three elements that brain researchers agree are necessary for optimal learning. These elements encourage an approach that helps expand the student's learning styles. The three approaches to learning styles are consistent with the learning process of gathering information

and processing it that students learned in the previous two chapters and shows them how to activate that information, which will be useful in the next chapter on test taking.

Chapter 9, Test-Taking Strategies, introduces strategies to help students excel on different kinds of tests, including final exams. Building on the previous strategies that students have learned, this chapter is perfectly poised to show students how the strategies they've learned will help them succeed on their tests.

Although students experience stress and need to know specifics about their higher education environment during the first days of school, the chapters on these subjects are purposely placed toward the end of the text. It has been my experience that students get a bit "antsy" at the beginning of the semester and want to learn skills they can use immediately. Having addressed those skills in Chapters 5–9, they are now seeking ways to practice them and to deal with the stress that higher education presents. Chapter 10 therefore discusses strategies for managing stress and includes a new section on assertiveness training to help students learn to say "no" when they need to. By building upon the previous strategies, including time management, critical thinking, and setting goals, this chapter shows students that the skills they have learned will not only allow them to succeed but will also help them manage their stress.

Finally, a fully revised Chapter 11, Information Literacy, wraps up the text by covering a systematic approach for information literacy and research to help students have the tools they need to be an effective student in the information age. This chapter highlights important critical-thinking strategies for evaluating sources and documenting research.

Appendix A addresses some unique strategies needed for studying math. It is common for students to believe that they are not good at math. The appendix begins with an inventory evaluating students' math study skills, and here many students discover that it may not be math that is the problem; rather it is their approach to studying math that prevents them from being successful. Appendix A walks students back through each textbook topic to discover ways to fine-tune strategies they have already learned and to apply them to the math classroom.

Special Features and Pedagogical Aids

The Seventh Edition includes carefully constructed features that help focus student learning and reinforce the themes of the book.

Learning Outcomes

Clearly defined learning outcomes form a framework for learning by providing instructors and students with standards and expectations for every lesson. Each chapter begins with a list of what students will learn in the chapter. At the end of the chapter, the feature "Evaluating Learning Outcomes" allows students to see exactly what they've learned and

accomplished in the text. These learning outcomes should be the basis for selecting content, classroom activities, and assessments such as chapter or unit tests and final projects or exams.

Student Tips

Because students want proof that the strategies really work, each chapter includes tips from students who have actually tried the strategies and who have found unique ways to use them in the college setting. Giving advice about using strategies successfully helps give students ownership of new concepts and confidence to apply them to new situations.

Making Connections

This critical-thinking feature combines the "Making Connections" and "Making It Concrete" features from the Sixth Edition. Making Connections helps students analyze and synthesize what they've learned and apply new concepts or skills to other courses or situations in their life.

Virtual Field Trips

Updated for the Seventh Edition, the "Virtual Field Trip" features provide opportunities to expand textbook information (without adding length) and give students more opportunities to adapt, personalize, and evaluate strategies. Many of the Virtual Field Trips in the Seventh Edition include more activities and videos. These guided Internet activities help students, both on campus and off, to find useful and reliable resources, engage in purposeful Internet searches, and build both confidence and skill in using Internet resources. The Virtual Field Trips also allow students to apply the learning model to student success topics such as campus safety, health issues, and budgeting. In addition, these features allow flexibility to use this text as the core for a student success course and, at the same time, include other important student success issues.

Brain Bytes

"Brain Byte" features appear in the margin throughout the text, providing bite-sized factoids relevant to the chapter material. Updated for the Seventh Edition, these features highlight topics that brain researchers have discovered.

Modeling the Learning Process

In each chapter, students are guided through all four steps of the process with the exercises and activities and debriefed at the end of each chapter with the "Modeling the Learning Process" feature so that they become more aware of the process they just used. They see that the effect is ownership of information, not just memorization. They move from receivers of knowledge to producers of knowledge. By modeling the process repeatedly, students should be able to more easily transfer the learning model to their other classes.

Study Guide

Each chapter includes a "Study Guide" (previously titled "Summary") that students fill out in order to remember content in the chapter and prepare for tests. This study guide is modeled on the Question in the Margin System and helps students learn to develop their own effective study methods using the Question in the Margin System for their other courses.

Parallel Parking

Each chapter in the Seventh Edition ends with a critical-thinking exercise that applies the driving analogy to concepts learned in the chapter. Brain research confirms that using metaphors or analogies is one of the best ways for students to demonstrate that they understand a new concept. We know that the brain needs to know that it knows something. We also know that the only way new learning is processed into long-term memory is to make new connections to connections that are already in the brain. The "Parallel Parking" exercise at the end of each chapter promotes this kind of critical thinking. The analogy that students need to assume the responsibilities of drivers runs throughout the text. The "Parallel Parking" feature is a natural extension of this analogy, which encourages students to think critically about how the strategies used in each chapter and their experience as college students parallel various driving terms.

Case Study: What's Your Advice?

Each chapter summary, with the exception of Chapter 1, is followed by a case study exercise in which students synthesize and evaluate what they have learned in the chapter so that they can provide advice to a fictional fellow student.

New to the Seventh Edition

- **New!** Chapter 10, Managing Stress, has been revised to include a new section on assertiveness training to teach students when and how to say "no," in college and in life.
- New! Chapter 11, Information Literacy, includes a new section on how to research job possibilities.
- New! Redesigned interior reflects the book's driving motif to remind students that learning is a journey and they must be in the driver's seat, looking for road signs, planning ahead for where they are going, and reflecting on where they went.
- **New!** "Road Map to Success" is a new chapter opener map that provides an easy to follow guide of the chapter's main topics. Clearly listed learning outcomes introduce exactly what the student will learn in each chapter.
- **New!** A new introduction, "Where Are We Going?" facilitates critical thinking by framing every chapter in terms of the other content

- in the book so the student understands where and why each strategy fits with the other strategies they are learning.
- **New!** "Career Connections" is a new feature that shows students how the skills they are learning will now apply in the career world.
- **New!** The "For Your Student Survival Kit" feature highlights key strategies within the chapter to encourage students to save the information so they can reference it after class.
- **New!** Exercises have been renamed "Practice" in order to highlight the need to *practice* the strategies in the book, not just memorize them.

Additional Resources

The Seventh Edition offers additional resources to both students and instructors.

For Students

New! MindTap for *Practicing College Learning Strategies* MindTap is a personalized teaching experience with relevant assignments that guide students to analyze, apply, and improve thinking, allowing you to measure skills and outcomes with ease.

- Personalized Teaching: Becomes yours with a Learning Path that
 is built with key student objectives. Control what students see and
 when they see it. Use it as-is or match to your syllabus exactly—hide,
 rearrange, add, and create your own content.
- Guide Students: A unique learning path of relevant readings, multimedia, and activities that move students up the learning taxonomy from basic knowledge and comprehension to analysis and application.

To assist students with learning course content:

- Chapter learning objectives
- Journal-based writing activities
- "Virtual Field Trip" activities that ask students to research key chapter topics online and report back on their findings

To assess student learning:

- Interactive versions of the Practice activities and study guides
- Additional interactive chapter quizzes
- Chapter homework assignments powered by Aplia
- Promote Better Outcomes: Empower instructors and motivate students with analytics and reports that provide a snapshot of class progress, time in course, engagement, and completion rates.

College Success Factors Index (CSFI) 2.0 The College Success Factors Index (CSFI) 2.0, developed by Edmond Hallberg and Kaylene Hallberg, is an online survey that students complete to assess their patterns of behavior and attitudes in ten key areas. These areas have been proven by research to affect student outcomes for success in higher education. Accessed online,

the CSFI is a useful assessment tool for demonstrating the difference your college success course makes in students' academic success. At the start of the course, the CSFI helps assess incoming students and allows you to tailor your course topics to meet their needs. As a post-test, it provides an opportunity for you (and your students) to measure progress. An Early Alert reporting option identifies students who are most at risk of getting off course in college. This information enables you to intervene at the beginning of the semester to increase students' likelihood of success—and improve retention rates. For more information about CSFI, visit our website at www.cengage.com/success/csfi2.

Study Skills Help Page You and your students may also want to log onto The Study Skills Help Page, the website I developed for the course I teach using this text: http://capone.mtsu.edu/studskl. This website includes Practice Tests, games, and videos to help students study more effectively and more efficiently. Strategies for Success includes tips on being successful in college. A list of Links to Other Useful Sites will help students explore reputable websites that will help them become better students.

For Instructors

The Instructor Companion Site is a comprehensive website that puts teaching tools and resources at your fingertips. By logging in at *CengageBrain.com*, you will find the following valuable instructor resources:

- The complete **Instructor Resource Manual**. Following the structure of the main text, the IRM provides teaching suggestions, additional activities, and exercises by chapter, in addition to the answers to the text's chapter summary questions.
- MindTap walk-through guide, which will include strategies for using MindTap in your course.
- **Transition Guide**. The transition guide for the Seventh Edition helps you move from the Sixth Edition to the Seventh Edition.
- **Sample Syllabi** to help you plan out your course.
- **Practice Unit Quizzes** that you can print for your students.
- **Answer Key to the Practice Unit Quizzes** to make grading easier.
- Links to the Virtual Field Trips that you can use in class.
- PowerPoint Presentations organized by topic and by chapter in order to aid lectures and give you the flexibility to design your course in the way you want.

TeamUP

An additional service available with the text is access to TeamUP, a group of experienced educators who provide an unparalleled suite of services offering you flexible and personalized assistance. Whether online, on the phone, or on campus, TeamUP delivers high-quality support including faculty development events, student success training, and material integration support.

The TeamUP Professional Educators have a wealth of experience teaching and administering the first-year course. They can provide help in

establishing or redesigning your student success program. They provide course design assistance, instructor training, teaching strategies, annual conferences, and much more. Learn more about TeamUP today by calling 1-800-528-8323 or visiting http://www.cengage.com/teamup/.

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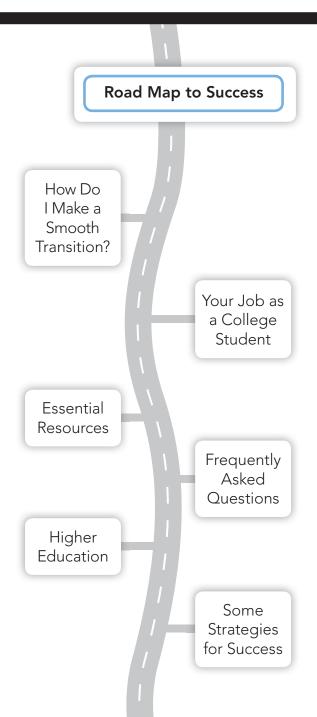
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Carolyn H. Hopper

CHAPTER

1

Making a Smooth Transition to College



In this chapter, you will learn how to

- Use analogies to explain what adjustments you will need to make to ensure your transition runs smoother.
- Explain what is found in basic resources such as the college catalog, student handbook, schedule book, syllabus, and student services website.
- Describe the steps of the learning process.
- Explain the responsibilities of a college student and identify behavior that is not acceptable.
- Calculate a grade point average.
- Evaluate your performance as a student by analyzing the behaviors you exhibit.
- **Demonstrate** how to properly e-mail your instructor.
- **Demonstrate** the BREATHE System.

Where Are We Going?

Brain research says that we may learn best through analogies, comparing something new to things we already know and understand. The primary analogy we will use throughout this text is that your college education is a journey. However, you can't just be a passenger on the journey—you must be the primary driver. You can't hop on a plane, look out at the clouds, read a book, watch a movie, eat and drink a bit, have a casual conversation with your seat mates, catch a nap, and get to your destination. Nor can you get there as a passenger on a bus or train. College education is a rough road trip. You can't take short cuts. You can't get there any other way than by doing it yourself. You must drive, and **you are the driver.** You choose the route, you follow the road signs, you step on the gas and the brakes, you fuel up, and you ask for directions. You fight fatigue and stress. But you also take in the whole experience of the drive, every curve and bump, every complex intersection, and every flat tire or fender bender. This chapter will show you how to be in the driver's seat on your way to reaching your destination. We will make a few stops along the way to help you get familiar with the road to success.

How Do I Make a Smooth Transition?

Driving in an unfamiliar place is difficult, much like trying to transition to an unfamiliar college life. You are definitely out of your comfort zone. You may make a few wrong turns. You may not take the shortest route. Even when you use MapQuest or a GPS, or instructors or other students to help you navigate, driving in a new territory requires concentration. Right now everything is new: the campus, the instructors, the amount of work required, and the speed with which things are covered—the entire college environment with **credit hours**, **general education requirements**, choice of which classes to take, and what time to take them. It's all pretty overwhelming.

Beginning your college education is a lot like traveling to a foreign country. Your entry into college transports you to a place that is foreign to you. The surroundings, the culture, the customs, and even the language are unfamiliar; you may have difficulty adjusting. Let's carry this analogy a bit further and say that you have just arrived at the airport in a foreign city. Each traveler brings different expectations and experiences. Some of you have visited this place before. You may have some idea of what you want to see again and perhaps you might want to change some things from your last visit. Some of you have carefully planned your trip. You have talked to those who have lived and worked here. You have read the guidebooks and have studied the culture and the language. You have prepared to make the most of the experience. Some travelers have arrived with little idea of where they are and the opportunities available here. Some of the travelers are here for a visit. Most of you, however, are here to take a job. You will become a resident of this place for a while and so you will want to discover all you can to make your experience meaningful and your job rewarding.

Your approach as you begin college may be the same approach that you would take if you were moving to a foreign city to do a job. You may get irritated because you don't understand the language. You may become frustrated because you are constantly getting lost. You may be confused or unaware that you have offended the local residents. This first chapter can become your travel guide; and although it can't tell you everything you will need to know, it will give you a heads-up on the language, the people, the customs, the expectations, and your responsibilities in your new job. It can also offer some tools to help you make the most of your experience and to make your transition to college smoother. You have chosen to come here. This is your new job. You will be spending a great deal of time, money, and effort trying to be successful in a foreign place. The good news is you can soon be acting like a native.

As you read this chapter, you will find several bold print words. These are words that are frequently used in college; you may not be totally familiar with them. At the end of the chapter in the review section, you will be asked to list at least five of these words and define them as they are used on your campus. When you get to a word, you may want to turn to the end of the chapter and record it as you read.

This is a learning strategies text, a manual with tips to help make your drive smoother, your experience better. This text is about more than how to study. The focus of the text is on learning how to learn. The world is changing at an amazing pace. We are able to access more and more information using more and more technology. In fact, the job you will be doing 10 years from now probably doesn't exist now in the form you will be performing it. I honestly believe that the most important thing you will learn in college is learning how to learn. You will learn how to maximize your memory, your note taking, your textbook reading, your test-taking, your critical thinking, your time management, and your information literacy. You will be provided with practice so that you can adapt the strategies to your situation. Just as you don't become a good driver (or musician or athlete) without practice, using learning strategies and becoming a successful college student requires practice. The attitude with which you approach this course will make the difference in more than just passing a course. You will be developing skills to make your life better.

Your Job as a College Student

You are a college student. This is your job! Many of you are still working your old job; however, beginning college is the same as beginning a new job. Each semester is a promotion and brings new responsibilities.



Think of your first days on other jobs. In fact, jot down some things you remember about your first few weeks on the job. I'm sure you didn't just choose a place to work and say, "I think I'll work here today." Many of us may have approached college this way, however. For your job, someone interviewed you; when you were hired, someone explained exactly what was expected of you, what procedures to use, how to work necessary equipment, and where to go to find out information you did not know, or who to report to. Often this is not the case at the beginning of college. Some of us plunged right in. You should approach college as you would a new job. Don't just wander in and begin work without knowing essential information. This is not your high school, the job you left or currently work, or the world you were immersed in six months ago. Find out as much as you can about this new work environment, both what is expected of you and what resources are available. If you have not already done so, meet with an academic advisor. Discover how to register for each term in the most efficient manner and which courses you really need to take. You are spending too much time, effort, and money not to do it right!

Essential Resources

At most colleges and universities, there are some essential resources that will provide you with your "job description" as a student, in addition to explaining how to get "promotions," or better grades.

First Essential Resource: College Catalog

The **first essential resource** you need is the **college catalog**. Because it is changed periodically, the catalog for the year you enroll becomes your contract with the university. Containing the rules, regulations, and procedures you are expected to follow, the catalog corresponds to a company's policy manual.

Most degree or certificate programs require a certain number of credit hours to graduate. The catalog will spell out which classes you are required to take. In addition, the catalog lists a detailed description of each course. You need to know what is in the catalog for your college. Similar to how you would use a reference book, you will probably not read the catalog cover to cover. However, it's a good idea to put it in a place where you will look at it often, both to become aware of policies and procedures and to understand your degree requirements. If you have declared a major, you should also study that section carefully. If you don't have a major yet, the catalog is a good source of information to help you decide on one. What majors are offered? What does each require? What major would you really like to take classes in? When you register for classes, you should consult the catalog for a description of the course you are registering for. These course descriptions may help you determine some possible majors to consider.



Using Your College Catalog

Consult your college catalog and find the following information (insert page numbers so you can find this again; you may need to use a separate sheet of paper for some of the questions). You may also find that there is an online version that is easier to use.

Locate the academic calendar :	
What are the holidays for this se	mester?
When are your final exams?	
How do you drop or add a cours	se?
What is the significance of cours	se numbers?
What degrees are offered at you	ur institution?
What are the requirements for the	ne degree you seek?
Find the course description of c write a brief summary of that co	one course that you are required to take, and urse.
What grade point average (GPA	A) do you need to graduate?

General Education, or Core Curriculum, Courses

One of the most important uses of the catalog is determining which courses to take and when to take them. Most colleges and universities have a required **core curriculum**, often called *general education* or *general studies* courses. No matter the major, any student who graduates

from that college or university must complete a required number of courses covering a broad area. According to the Association of American Colleges, college graduates should:

possess the marks of a generally educated person—that is, having such qualities as a broad base of knowledge in history and culture, mathematics and science, the ability to think logically and critically, the capacity to express ideas clearly and cogently, the sensitivities and skills to deal with different kinds of people, sophisticated tastes and interests, and the capability to work independently and collaboratively.¹

College education should be both specialized (a major) and broad (general education) because we experience the world whole, not in isolated parts such as history or biology. A national survey from CareerBuilder finds that as many as one-half of college graduates work in areas unrelated to their majors. General education provides students with adaptive skills for an uncertain future.

The requirement of general education courses allows students to build a base of general knowledge even before they decide on a major. But here's where you may need to be careful in your choices of classes. Although there are usually many choices in an area of general studies, your major may require a particular class. By seeing an advisor, you can avoid taking and paying for extra courses.

What follows is a copy of a poster loaded with useful things you can learn from your advisor. Students sometimes avoid seeing their advisor, when, in fact, an advisor's services may be one of the biggest bargains included in your tuition. Study "All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned from My Advisor." Circle at least four things you might ask your advisor about.

Student**TIP**

"Even though you think you don't need to, check with your advisor to make sure you are on track. If you have been assigned an advisor who is not helpful to you, ask to be assigned another advisor."

All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned from My Advisor

What classes to take this semester, and next semester, and the next semester, and ... • Why I can't take 40 hours if I can work 40 hours • That I should study a minimum of two hours outside class for every hour in class • How many credits I need to graduate • Information about graduate schools • How to get an overload • Why I must take general studies classes that have nothing to do with my major • "Mr. Staff" isn't the hardest-working instructor on campus • How to withdraw from a class • An advisor writes a good recommendation letter • How to change my major • What minors might be good for me • Scholarships offered by my department • Why I shouldn't take all my classes in a row • When and where to file my upper-division and intent-to-graduate forms • What employers in my field are looking for • What campus organizations would benefit me • Career information • My advisor cares

—Laurie B. Witherow and Ginger A. Corely

¹Strong Foundations: Twelve Principles for Effective General Education Programs (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, 1994, ii–iii).

A **second resource** you should have is your institution's **student handbook**. Handbooks usually list specific student resources and student organizations, in addition to rules and regulations. Many colleges and universities have the handbook online or incorporated into the college plan book or agenda.

PRACTICE 1.2	
Using Your Student Handbook	
Consult your student handbook and find the following information. you can probably find an online version by searching your college hom	_
Where do you get a parking permit?	
WI L L L DO	
Where can you replace a lost ID?	
Name two student organizations you might be interested in joining.	
1	
2	
Where can you go for career counseling?	
Name three other things in the handbook, and explain a situation for that might arise where you would need to know this information.	or each
1	
2	
3.	





A **third resource** that you should keep is the current **schedule** or **registration book**. Some colleges have a printed version of the schedule book, others have a website, and many have both. The schedule book will have the class schedule for that **semester** or **term**, payment instructions, important dates for that semester such as drop-and-add dates, and the **final exam schedule**. Don't think that because you have registered, you are finished with this book. Like the catalog, the schedule book contains information that you are not likely to find elsewhere. Read it carefully, and save it for future reference. Because changes in classes or instructors

may be made after the schedule is printed, you should double-check offerings online whenever possible.

There are some basic strategies you should follow when you register for a new semester. Keep the following in mind when choosing classes:

- Outside Responsibilities. Consider your responsibilities outside college that may put constraints on your choice of classes. (List things you should consider.)
- Course Load. Given these constraints, what is a reasonable course load for you? Will this make a difference in when you can take classes?
- Options. Carefully study your options. Read the catalog to see what your logical choices are, both in general education and in requirements for your major. (List the options you have.)
- **Right Mix.** Taking the right mix of classes is also important. You don't want to exclusively take courses that require a great deal of reading. If math is difficult for you, you don't want to take all math-related courses. What classes are you considering for next semester? Is there a mix of types of classes and time required for each course?
- Other Students. If possible, talk to other students who have taken the classes you are considering. Many students say this is the best way to get a feel for what the classes will be like. Remember, however, that your learning style preferences and work ethic may be different from the students you ask.
- Seek the opinion of experts. Consult with your advisor. Your time and money are too valuable to just take the advice of another student or to guess. (Who is your advisor?) What are some questions you should ask? If you are in doubt about what is involved in a course you are considering, talk with the professor.
- **Time.** The time classes are offered may be important if you are working or have other responsibilities.

PRACTICE 1.3
Using Your Schedule Book
Consult your schedule book for the following (be sure to insert page numbers so you can find them again):
How much does this class cost to take?
When is the final exam for this class?

What are some important things you should consider when choosing class	es?
	_
How will you get your grades at the end of the semester?	

The fourth resource to keep handy at all times throughout the semester is the **syllabus** for each class. The syllabus gives you a picture of what will be expected of you during the semester. It contains the rules and policies for that particular class. Not all classes will have the same **grading scale**, **absence policy**, or **make-up policy**. In addition, a syllabus will contain overall course requirements and perhaps class-by-class assignments. The syllabus should contain your instructor's office hours and telephone number. Students forget most of what happens during the first day of class, so it's important to take notes and read your syllabus carefully, both to refresh your memory and to understand policies that perhaps weren't discussed. The syllabus is your contract with your professor. It is a good idea to go through the syllabus of each class and mark assignments and tests. You may also want to list them in your calendar, your plan book, agenda, or mobile devices. This will also help you develop and practice your time-management skills.

ICE 1.4
:
Can a missed test
ice hours?
ic

For Your Student Survival Kit

Assignment Log

You may find it helpful to keep up with your daily grade in this study skills class by making a chart like this. Record the quiz or assignment requested to be turned in, along with the due date. Check (\checkmark) whether you turned it in or not. When it is returned, record points earned divided by total points possible for your daily average.

Name				
ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	1	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS EARNED

Make sure you know how the grade for each assignment or test is derived. Check your syllabus to see how your final grade is determined.



Student Services

Are you missing out on some valuable resources just because you don't know they exist? Although most colleges try to keep the campus community aware of what they offer, it is difficult to keep up with all options. Take the Virtual Field Trip to identify some of those resources.

Frequently Asked Questions: Some FAQs by First-Year College Students or Transfers

The Student Affairs Office on many campuses offers "one-stop shopping," a place where you can find the answers to most of the questions below. You might also search your college homepage or ask other students, your advisor, or your professors for information.

- I don't own a computer. Where can I use one?
- Can I buy or rent one at a student rate?
- Are there workshops or classes I can take to become more computer literate?
- I don't have any financial aid. Where can I go to see if I qualify?
- What if I get sick? What kinds of health services are available?
- I am having trouble with my math, chemistry, and history. Are there tutoring services available?
- Is there affordable child care available on or near campus?
- I think I may have a learning disability. Is there a place I can get help?

- My professor suggested group study. Are there group study areas available?
- I am having nonacademic problems. Is there help available on campus?
- I need a part-time job. Where can I find out what kinds are available?
- Is tutoring available on campus?
- My professor says the more involved I get on campus, the more sense of belonging I will have. She says that this will contribute to my success as a student. What clubs or activities are available?
- Where can I cash a check or use an ATM?
- Where can I get photocopies made?
- Is public transportation available?
- What is there to do on the weekends?

Higher Education

You have already discovered that there is a great deal of difference in the demands made on you as a high school student or as an employee and those made on you as a college student. Stop and make a list of the differences you have found that affect you. Then examine your list and compare it against what other students have said.



What follows is a list of differences students have noted both between higher education and high school and between higher education and work. Choose at least four of these and comment on how you have learned to handle them. Be specific. If you have not been able to handle these differences yet, set specific goals for improvement.

- **1.** There is more reading to do.
- **2.** The campus is larger. It's hard to know what's available and who to see.
- 3. College classes are larger, and classmates are more diverse.
- **4.** I have less free time in college.
- **5.** I have more responsibilities in college.
- **6.** College seems more impersonal.
- **7.** I have more financial pressures in college.
- **8.** College professors give fewer tests and are less tolerant of excuses.
- **9.** There are so many courses offered at the college that I don't know what to take or when to take them.
- 10. Most classes at the college last for only one term (semester or quarter).

What difference *not* noted in the list has been most difficult for you?





BRAIN BYTE

In How People Learn, John Bransford says that the goal of education today should be "helping students develop the intellectual tools and learning strategies needed to acquire the knowledge that allows people to think productively about history, science and technology, social phenomena, mathematics and the arts." He suggests that fundamental understanding of all subjects, including how to ask questions about many subject areas, is a major factor in understanding the principles of learning that people need to develop in order to become lifelong learners.

Your Responsibilities?

You can't just attend college and expect to be successful. Less than 26 percent of Americans over the age of 25 have earned a college degree. It's not easy. There are certain expectations and responsibilities that go hand in hand with higher education. You are responsible for your learning. You are responsible not only for attending class, but preparing for it by doing the assigned homework and reading. You are responsible for finding a way to understand what goes on in class and working to achieve the learning outcomes set for each class.

You may have already noticed that your idea of learning and your professor's idea of learning are not always the same. Recognizing the difference and adjusting to it may be one of the most difficult (yet important) transitions you make as a first-year student. Your primary job as a college student is to be an information processor. You will process what you hear in lectures and make that information your own. You will process what you read in textbooks or experience in class and process it so that you own that information and can personally use it.

Modeling the Learning Process: Your Map for Learning How to Learn

As you begin your drive toward success as a college student, here is the basic model for learning. In his book *The Art of Changing the Brain*, Dr. James Zull reminds us that first and foremost, learning causes a physical change in the brain and that this change takes time². Dr. Zull says that there are four essentials of learning:

Gathering.

New information enters the brain through the senses. We hear, read, see, or interact with new information. (Some of us would like to think that listening to a lecture or reading an assignment is enough. It's not.)

Analyzing.

If we are to use this information in the future, we must understand it and look for relevance and meaning. (Now, if I understand it, can I stop? Not if you are to own the information.)

Creating New Ideas.

When we as learners convert comprehension into ideas, hypotheses, plans, and actions, we take control of the information. We have created a meaningful neural network and are free to test our own knowledge.

Acting.

The testing of the knowledge requires action for the learning cycle to be complete. Writing, speaking, drawing, or other action will identify a strategy that works for us and provides a way that we can test the newly learned information.

²James Zull, *The Art of Changing the Brain* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2002).

We are used to being *receivers* of knowledge, gathering new information and trying to make meaning of it. Learning occurs when we take that knowledge and become *producers* of new knowledge. In the following chapters, as you learn how to be a more successful student, watch for the process of how you take ownership of the knowledge content. In each chapter, we will follow this cycle; at the end of each chapter, we will identify what we have done so that you will be well on your way to understanding what your professors mean by *learning*.

With the learning model in mind, let's look at what professors say they wish their students understood about learning in college.

- I think the biggest adjustment first-year students have to make is
 understanding and taking responsibility for the amount and quality of work it takes to be successful. Professors are there to lead the
 class, but you must make the effort to learn.
- Most learning actually takes place outside of the classroom when you
 are analyzing, creating, and acting on information you gathered in class.
- The connections in your brain are like no one else's. You must take
 it upon yourself to do whatever it takes (required or not) to learn the
 material.
- It may seem like an obvious statement, but the work you do will result in the grade you get.
- When you miss a class, whether you are sick; have a family emergency, a court date, a doctor's appointment, or a sick child; are called in to work; or have transportation failure, you are still responsible for what went on in class. Usually turning in a homework assignment is not enough. You should have a partner in each class you can depend on to help you recreate what you missed.
- You are expected to read your e-mail daily.
- You are expected to participate actively in class and ask questions if you don't understand something.

Your professors are human, so they are always forming opinions. You need to be aware that the impression you make can have an effect on your grade. Even how and where you sit communicates something to your professor. The quality of your work is also important. Your assignments and the way you turn them in tell the instructor a great deal about you, how much you care about the course, and how serious you are about being successful in college. Whatever the assignment is, you should make an effort to complete it on time and fully. The more information you can give on an assignment, the higher your professor's opinion of you as a student will be. Getting by is not good enough in college. Not understanding is never an excuse in college, nor is not having enough time.

Try to get to know the professor personally; that way, when you do have a question or an emergency, you are able to relate better. Most of your professors have responsibilities other than teaching your class, just as you have responsibilities outside their class. If you wish to get extra help or clarification on an assignment, you should probably make an appointment during office hours. The professor's office hours are usually included in the syllabus. Check with each professor to see what his or her policy for student appointments is. If you just drop by, you may be disappointed to find another student has scheduled an appointment.



StudentTIP

"I used to complain about busy work assignments until I found it was my approach to the assignment that made it busy work. When I started taking assignments seriously, reading the text and the directions carefully, and trying to determine which learning outcome the assignment would help me complete, I could see all the time I had wasted by trying to rush to just get the homework assignment done."

Student Power

You hold more power in the classroom than you may realize. Ask any professor and he or she will tell you that the students in the class significantly affect the delivery of information. By coming prepared, sitting up front, paying attention, taking notes, making eye contact, nodding when you agree or understand, asking questions when you are confused, and actively participating in class activities, you are actually able to affect the professor's enthusiasm and approach to the class. Think about classes that you are taking now. The best professors have the best students. I can't be an exciting professor without your cooperation.

Some Strategies for Success

At the end of each semester, I ask students what they wish they had known at the beginning of their first semester that would have made the journey easier. Below is a list of general survival tips that former students say you should know.

General Survival Tips to Make Your Transition Smoother

If you haven't already registered, try not to schedule back-to-back classes. You'll wear yourself out, besides missing the best times to study—right before and right after class.

- **Begin the first day of class.** Know what's expected of you.
- Take notes on the first day. Even if it's routine stuff you think you already know.
- Take notes in class. Don't depend on your memory.
- **Read directions carefully** before you begin an assignment. Don't assume you know what to do.
- Establish a routine time to study for each class. For every hour you spend in class, you will probably need to study two hours outside class. Study for each subject at the same time and in the same place if possible. Studying includes more than just doing your homework. You will need to go over your notes from class—questioning, editing, and making sure you understand them. Study your syllabus daily to see where you are going and where you have been. Be sure to do reading assignments. (Don't put them off just because there's no written assignment.) Read ahead whenever possible. Prepare for each class as if there will be a pop quiz that day.
- Establish a place to study. Your place should have a desk, a comfortable chair, good lighting, all the supplies you need, and so on; and of course, it should be as free of distractions as possible. It should not be a place where you routinely do other things. It should be your study place.
- **Study during the day.** Do as much of your studying in the daytime as you can. What takes you an hour to do during the day may take



StudentTIP

"I thought it would take too much time to study in a group so I didn't even bother to get to know other students in my class. After I did poorly on the first test, I decided to try studying for tests in a group and also comparing notes after class. Not only did I ace the class, I made some great friends that have been there for me when I needed them for non-academic issues."

you an hour and a half at night. If possible, avoid long blocks of time for studying. Spread out several short study sessions during the day.

- **Stay on top of your work.** Although it may seem obvious, your grades, your preparation for class, and class attendance are directly related to your success as a student. Once you miss a day or an assignment, it is very difficult to ever get caught up.
- **Keep a list of what is due in each class** and try to get as much done ahead of time as you can. You will have major assignments and tests due on the same day.
- Make use of study resources on campus. Find out about and use labs, tutors, videos, computer programs, and alternative texts. Sign up for an orientation session in the campus library and computer lab. Get to know your professors and advisors. Ask questions. Remember, not understanding something is never a good excuse. Get involved in school activities in general. And become a part of some group, so that when the unexpected happens (and it will), you have support.
- Find at least one or two students in each class to study with. Research shows that students who study with someone routinely make better grades. You will probably find yourself more motivated if you know someone else cares about what you are doing in the class. Teaching a concept or new idea to someone else is a sure way for you to understand it. However, because studying in a group or with a partner can sometimes become too social, it is important to stay focused.
- Study the hardest subject first. Work on your hardest subjects when you are fresh. Putting them off until you're tired compounds their difficulty.
- **Be good to yourself.** Studying on four hours of sleep and an empty stomach or a junk-food diet is a waste of time. Avoid food and drink containing caffeine just before or just after studying.

Tips for Taking Notes and Reading Textbooks

It's the first day of class. You need to know that short-term memory can hold only five to seven bits of information at a time. This means that you can understand everything said in class, but will remember very little if you don't take notes. You know you need to take notes, but you're not sure how to record the important information. Examine the illustration titled "Notes That Save Time." The **Question in the Margin System** is a great way to take notes and will be explained in detail later; meanwhile, know that your notes will be more useful if you set your paper up as in the illustration.

- Use the left margin to identify what each section of notes is about by writing a question or label in the margin as soon as you can after class.
- Use the bottoms of pages for reminders such as assignments you need to check.



StudentTIP

"When studying in a group I found that you can stay focused and get more done if each person in the group has an assigned task and a list of concepts that are causing them problems. It also helps to set a time limit."



BRAIN BYTE

Dr. Judith Wurtman of M.I.T. says that proper nutrition can boost thinking and learning. The brain's most basic need is oxygen, but ingredients found in protein are critical to the brain. For your mental alertness, make three to four ounces of protein-rich foods a regular part of your daily diet.

Notes That Save Time

Question for key points

Take notes here

Summarize in your words

QUESTION IN THE MARGIN SYSTEM

Reading That Saves Time



- The left margin should be about two and a half inches wide.
- Take your notes on the wide right-hand side.
- Don't write in full sentences. Write only the few words you need to help you remember what was said in class. Use the same techniques you use when you compose text messages: important information in shorthand.

Begin the semester taking notes like this, and when you get to the Question in the Margin System, you will be well on your way to learning how to process important information from lectures into your long-term memory.

Yes, I know that you already have reading assignments, too. You probably remember reading entire chapters and understanding the material as you read it; however, when you finished, you had no idea what you read. Again, the reason is probably that short-term memory holds only five to seven bits of information. This is the amount of information in a well-written paragraph. You read and understand one paragraph. When you begin the next paragraph, short-term memory dumps that information to make room for new information. Begin using the same system that you used for your class notes. As you finish each paragraph, write a question in the left margin that identifies the main ideas and underline the answer in the paragraph before you go to the next paragraph. Furthermore, you will get more out of the assignment if you preview it first. Study the title, headings, bold print, summary, charts, graphs, and tables before you begin reading. Again, keep up to date with your reading and read ahead whenever you can.

PRACTICE 1.5



Evaluating Your Classroom Savvy

You have been on the job several class periods by now. Just as when on the job or on the road, you need to meet certain expectations if you are to be successful. At the beginning of your journey, you should be aware of what is expected of you as a college student. How well are you doing? In the following list, put a plus (+) sign beside the behaviors that you already do well and a minus (–) sign beside the ones you need to improve. As you evaluate the behaviors you exhibit, analyze why each behavior is important.

behaviors	you exhibit, analyze <i>why</i> each behavior is important.
1.	Attend every class.
2.	Come to class prepared.
3.	Be alert and attentive in class.
4.	Participate in class discussions.
5.	Show an interest in the subject.
6.	Ask questions when you don't fully understand.
7.	Seek outside sources if you need clarification.
8.	Take advantage of all labs, study sessions, and outside help.
9.	Set up meetings with your professors to discuss your progress
10.	Go the extra mile with all papers and assignments.
11.	Always be on time for class.

 12. Take notes.
 13. When you must miss a class, make sure you find out exactly what you missed, make up the work, and come prepared for the next class.
 14. Comment on lecture material.
 15. Get to know your professors.
 16. Set goals and objectives for your classes.
 17. Evaluate yourself.
 18. Be supportive of your classmates.
 19. Have a positive attitude toward the professor and the class.

PRACTICE 1.6

Unsavvy Behavior

Now let's have a little fun. Your task is to come up with a list of *unsavvy* behaviors you have noticed in the classroom. See if you can list 10 unsavvy things that you have seen happen this semester. You may also want to ask your professors to add to your list. Let's start off with some obvious ones.

- 1. Coming in late for class.
- 2. Copying homework or cheating on a test or other assignments.
- 3. Leaving cell phone on or texting during class.

5. _____

6._____

8

9.

10. _____

Your Grade Point Average

Your college requires you to have a certain number of credit hours in certain areas in order to graduate. Each course you take is assigned the appropriate number of credit hours. Your college or university also requires that you maintain a certain grade point average (GPA) to stay in school or to qualify for certain programs. Thus, it is important that you know how to calculate your grade point average. The chart on the next page shows how to perform this calculation using a four-point system. Check your college catalog to see by which system your grades are calculated. If a plus or minus system is used, your catalog will explain how to use it to calculate your GPA.

How to Calculate Your GPA

The following is an explanation of how to calculate a GPA. You may want to use the chart to help you calculate the following examples.

- 1. List each graded course.
- 2. Enter the letter grade received.
- **3.** Enter the grade point value (A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0).
- 4. Enter course credit hours.
- **5.** Multiply line items from column 3 by line items in column 4, and put the product in column 5. = GPA
- **6.** Add column 4 to get total credit hours.
- **7.** Add column 5 to get total quality points.
- **8.** Divide the quality points by the number of credit hours to get your grade point average.

Consult your college catalog to find out how your university figures grade point averages.

1	2	3	4	5
NAME OF COURSE	LETTER GRADE	LETTER GRADE VALUE	CREDIT HOURS FOR COURSE	QUALITY POINTS
			×	=
			×	=
			×	=
			×	=
			×	=
			×	=
		Total		





Grade Point Average Practice

Calculate John's grade point averages for the fall and spring terms. Carry the averages to hundredths; do not round.

Grade point average for fall term:

Grade point average for spring term: _

Cumulative grade point average:			
FALL TERM COURSE	HOURS CREDIT	GRADE	
Math 1410	3	С	
Hper 1070	1	А	
Math 1700	3	В	
Spee 2200	3	В	
UVIV 1010	3	В	
Psyc 1110	3	D	
Grade point average for fall term:			
SPRING TERM COURSE	HOURS CREDIT	GRADE	
Art 1010	3	А	
Math 1000	3	В	
Biog 1010	4	D	
ROTC	1	С	
Eng 1010	3	С	
Grade point average for spring term: Now calculate what John's <i>cumulative</i> (fall plus spring) grade point average is. The formula is the same:			
total quality points total credit hours Cumulative grade point average:			

Cumulative grade point average:

Add the following courses for the summer term, and compute John's cumulative GPA—his average for all three terms, not just his summer GPA.

COURSE	HOURS CREDIT	GRADE
Phy sci 2000	3	В
Eng 1120	3	С

Cumulative grade point average:	
---------------------------------	--

E-mail Etiquette

Because the first impression you make on your professors may be by e-mail and because we are in the habit of being very casual with our e-mails, it is important that you be careful to follow proper e-mail etiquette. Remember that your professor is not one of your casual friends; show proper respect in the salutation and in the body of your e-mail. Here are some minimum guidelines:

- Use the subject line to summarize the text of your message. With so much spam (junk e-mail), your message will likely be deleted without being read if you don't include a subject.
- **Don't write anything you wouldn't say in public.** Anyone can easily forward your message, even accidentally. This could leave you in an embarrassing position if you divulge personal or confidential information. If you don't want to share something you write, consider using the telephone.
- Use a spell checker before you send. This is an option on most e-mail programs. E-mail, like conversation, tends to be sloppier than communication on paper. That's OK; but even with e-mail, you don't want to appear excessively careless. *Read* the e-mail before you send it.
- **Identify yourself.** The message contains your e-mail address (in the header); but many times the header the system uses puts only the e-mail address, and the recipient will not know who the message is from unless you include your name in your e-mail. If you are sending it to your instructor, it's a good idea to identify the class you are in as well. Be sure to address your professor as a professional.
- · Keep your message short and focused.
- **Don't overuse upper case.** This is viewed as SHOUTING.
- Check your e-mail at least once a day. Answer pertinent e-mails as soon as possible.
- **Delete spam.** Even with filters, you will get an excessive amount of junk e-mail. You don't have to open or read it. You can check messages you want to delete and delete without reading.
- Don't overuse Reply All. Use Reply All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.
- Don't forward chain letters, jokes, and so on.

Note the differences in the two e-mails below. Why would you want your e-mail to resemble the first one?

Sample e-mail #1

From: jones3st@mtsu.edu To: Chopper@mtsu.edu

Subject: Question about homework assignment page 17

Dr. Hopper,

My name is Sam Jones. I am a student in your Student Success 1010 class, Section 11. I am confused about the College Life Virtual Field Trip assignment on page 17. Could I meet with you during your office hours today or tomorrow? I could come before 10 am on either day if you are available.

Thanks, Sam Jones

Sample e-mail #2

From: jones3st@mtsu.edu To: Chopper@mtsu.edu Subject:

Hey,

Don't know wht 2 do with homework. where's ur office?

Tips for Online Courses

- Familiarize yourself with the course design. Study the syllabus. Make sure you understand not only what is required but also when it is required and how to complete each requirement.
- Read the entire course syllabus. The distance learning course syllabus contains all of the information you need to progress through a distance learning course. This includes information about the course description, objectives, and requirements; course meetings, assignments, and testing; media and technology used; a course calendar or assignment schedule; and support contact information.
- **Be realistic.** You will not have to keep a class attendance schedule, but you will have to do regular academic work. Since you are taking the course online, you should put in at least the minimum of what you would do in a course in the classroom. You should be spending at least three study hours each week for every credit hour you are taking. Depending on the course and your background on the material, it may take more time. You can't "be absent" for several weeks and expect to catch up. So if there is insufficient time in your personal schedule to do the work of the course, you will be frustrated.

- Set interim goals and deadlines for yourself, and stick to them. Keep a calendar showing the number of weeks in the semester and mark it off with the amount of work you need to do each week. Mark in the days when you expect to take tests, submit projects, or talk with the instructor. Don't fall behind on your work! Keep reminding yourself that you will always have more to do near the end of a course than you do at the beginning.
- Organize your goals in a study schedule. Identify study times when you are fresh and attentive, and stick to those times every week. Think of the study times as reserved times. If you miss too many study times, revise your schedule.
- Avoid interruptions. Avoid all interruptions and distractions.
- Know where to study. Find a place that is free from distractions.
 You might consider your workplace—before or after hours and on your lunch hour—a public library, or a separate room in your home.
- **Stay in touch with your instructor.** Contact your instructor regularly, especially when you have questions about course content materials. Instructors are usually available by telephone or e-mail, or you may make an appointment for an on-campus meeting.
- Prepare for assignments and tests. In distance learning, course assignments could involve the use of different media: print, video, audio, and the Internet. Remember, you are not just watching or listening. You are learning from the information in these various media. Take notes. When using your study guide, textbook, videos, audiotapes, or Internet course assignments, imagine questions that might be on a test.

The BREATHE System: A Tool to Help You Focus

Let's conclude this chapter with one last tool you may find helpful when dealing with the stress of the first few weeks of college.

Dr. Ralph Hillman has developed a technique he calls the BREATHE System, designed to help classroom teachers train their students to reduce anger, control potential violence, and raise test scores. The program has some benefits for college students as well. The BREATHE System is a way to deal with low self-esteem, test anxiety, feelings of being overwhelmed, anger, and stress. Like much of what you will learn in this text, the system is relatively simple, but requires discipline. It is probably not something you would automatically think of as a learning strategy; however, when you practice it, you will find that it promotes concentration and clear thinking, as well as relieves stress. The BREATHE System involves knowing and consciously forming the habit of using what Dr. Hillman calls the Big 3.3

³From *Delivering Dynamic Presentations: Using Your Voice and Body for Impact* by Ralph E. Hillman (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999). Copyright © 1999. Reprinted by permission of the author.

The Big 3: Posture, Neck and Shoulder Muscles, and Breath Support

- 1. Straighten Your Posture. Good posture allows the organs of your body to operate efficiently and has a positive mental effect on your self-esteem. Moreover, good posture makes you look confident and competent and it supplies your brain with a better supply of oxygen. The six essential components of good posture are listed below:
 - **A. Unlock your knees** while standing; if you "snap," or force, the knees back, making your legs rigid, blood flow to your brain is diminished, and the natural curves in your spine are exaggerated.
 - **B.** Level your pelvis so that the gentle arch of your lower spine is encouraged. If the pelvis is pulled too far back, the arch is exaggerated, and too much tension is placed on the muscles necessary for efficient breathing.
 - **C. Tuck your tummy.** Make a conscious effort to pull your belly button back toward your spine. Leveling your pelvis and elevating your rib cage will make this process easier. Most of us want tight abs, but we are not willing to maintain the constant postural pressure on those muscles to allow them to be in position all the time.
 - **D.** Elevate your rib cage. Keeping your ribs slightly elevated frees the thoracic cavity (rib cage) to move freely during inhalation and exhalation.
 - E. Push your shoulders back and down. If the previous four steps are in place, positioning the shoulders is a lot easier. If you are having trouble getting a "feel" for where the shoulders should be, try this: Put your back up against a wall. For most of us, our buttocks hit the wall first, then the shoulders, and finally the head. Put your hands up at shoulder level with the backs of your hands against the wall or as close to the wall as you can get them. Notice the pull in the muscles of your upper chest. As you are standing against the wall, with your hands by your sides, your thumbs should fall easily along the seams in your slacks or trousers. As your shoulders roll forward, your hands will hang in front of your body and not along the sides.
 - F. Hold your head up so that there is a straight line from the bottom of your ear to the top of your shoulder, to the top of your hip, and to the center of your foot. Keep your head level, eyes forward. If your body shape is deep through the thoracic cavity, putting your head against the wall may be too far back for you. The goal here is to have your body line up, whether standing or sitting. If the angle of the back of your chair is too far back, then don't lean all the way back. Push your lower back against it, then sit erect. Use good posture as your home position. Use it often, be consistent, and soon it will become your habit.

- 2. Relax Your Neck and Shoulder Muscles. The second part of the Big 3 is to relax your neck and shoulder muscles (remember: shoulders back and down). Most of us are unaware that these muscles are inappropriately tensed much of the time. So relaxing these tensed muscles may be as easy as realizing they are tense. By checking with a mirror, placing your hands on your neck, or using a buddy to check for your visible tension, you can learn to feel when those muscles are tight and tense. Like the home position with posture, this relaxation position should be practiced until it becomes a habit. Once good posture is achieved and awareness of the start of any tension is maintained, we are ready to work on breathing.
- **3. Breathe** by taking cleansing breaths. The third part of the Big 3 is **breath support.** For proper breath support, you need to breathe using the muscles of your diaphragm, which "attach at the base of the rib cage and hump up into the chest cavity." Dr. Hillman describes breathing as most efficient when the muscle activity and movement are around the torso, between the navel and the base of the sternum. The ribs should rise slightly and move sideways. You should keep the tummy firm from the navel down, expanding the rib cage sideways.

Dr. Hillman reminds us "to use the upper abdominal muscles without raising the shoulders or puffing out the lower abdominal cavity (our lungs are not down there)." To obtain the most value from diaphragmatic breathing, use a deep, cleansing breath: keep your posture erect and neck and shoulders relaxed (steps one and two of the Big 3).

- **A.** Now, **completely fill your lungs,** allowing the air to enter through your nose, freely and easily expanding the rib cage sideways.
- **B.** Then, **pursing your lips, completely empty your lungs** by blowing the air out, keeping the exhaled air under pressure by using your diaphragm. To determine that you are getting the full benefit of a cleansing breath, place your hands around your abdominal area at the base of the ribs. You should feel this area moving in and out, and expanding sideways.
- **C.** Concentrate on slowing down your inhales and exhales. Practice by starting with 5-second inhales and 5-second exhales. Progress to 10-second inhales and 10-second exhales. A cleansing breath will make you both more relaxed and alert.

To help form the breathing habit in the classroom, begin class by taking a few minutes to breathe. You will find that the BREATHE System gives you an edge in practicing other learning strategies. For this reason, it will be suggested as a strategy in several chapters. An overview of Dr. Hillman's BREATHE System is presented later. If you want to know more, read Chapter 7 of his book, *Delivering Dynamic Presentations*. You can also log on to http://thebreathesystem.com for more information.



Review—Where did we go?

Study Guide: Making a Smooth Transition to College

To see if you grasped the major points of the chapter and to make a useful study guide, answer the following questions found in your reading. When you have written your answers, cover them and see if you can say the answer to each question in your own words.

1. We used three analogies at the beginning of this chapter. Explain how each could relate to your college experience.
1. Student must be the driver
2. You have landed in a foreign country.
3. You are here to begin a new job.
2. List some skills this course should help you maximize.
3. List at least three essential resources found in the college catalog.
4. What are core curriculum or general education courses? Why are they required?
5. List what you consider as three important reasons for consulting with an academic advisor.1
2.
3.
6. Explain what is found in your institution's student handbook.

7. What are some important things to consider when choosing classes?
8. Explain what essentials are found in the schedule book for each semester.
9. What is a syllabus? Explain why it is important.
10. Name four student services you will use.
1
2. 3.
4.
11. Name the four steps of the learning process.
1.
2.
3.
4
12. List some responsibilities that professors say are necessary for student success.
13. Describe the power you have as student to make your class better or worse.
14. After reviewing the general survival tips to make your journey easier, choose the four tips you consider the most important for you.
1.
2.
3.
4.

15. Briefly explain how to take notes using the Question in the Margin System.		
16. Briefly explain how to read your textbook	x using the Question in the Margin System.	
17. What is a GPA?		
18. Explain how to calculate your GPA.		
19. Examine the list of suggestions for e-mail think are most important? Explain why. 1		
20. Explain how you might use the BREATHI		
Higher Education Vocabulary Wo At the beginning of the chapter, you were asked to List five of these words and define them as they a	o list bold print words that might need clarification.	
VOCABULARY WORD	DEFINITION	
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Parallel Parking

We seem to understand concepts and remember them better when we compare them with something familiar. The running analogy in this text is comparing various strategies you may need to develop to be successful in college with strategies you may need when you are the driver on a road trip. At the end of each chapter, you will be asked to think about what we have discussed so far and compare these discoveries with driving ideas. Let's begin by reflecting on your first few days of college life.

Compare the following driving situations to something you experienced the first few days of college.

The first few days of college were like a **traffic jam** because

The first few days of college were like **getting lost in a new city** because

The first few days of college were like making a U-turn because

Evaluating Learning Outcomes

How successful were you in making it to your destination in this chapter?

Analyze what you learned in this chapter. Put a check beside each task you are now able to do. On a separate piece of paper, write a couple of sentences about how you learned each learning outcome and how you plan to continue to use what you learned.

and	how you plan to continue to use what you learned.
	Use analogies to explain what adjustments you will need to make to ensure your transition runs smoothly.
	Explain what is found in basic resources such as the college catalog, student handbook, schedule book, syllabus, and student services website.
	Describe the steps of the learning process.
	Explain the responsibilities of a college student, and identify behavior that is not acceptable.
	Calculate a grade point average.
	Evaluate your performance as a student by analyzing the behaviors you exhibit.
	Demonstrate how to properly e-mail your instructor.
	Demonstrate the BREATHE System.
Yo	ur Student Tip for This Chapter
	the space below to write a tip you would give to other students about what you have learned in chapter.