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BECOMING A
**MASTER
STUDENT**

MAKING THE CAREER CONNECTION



Dave Ellis
17e

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**MASTER
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MAKING THE CAREER CONNECTION

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Dave Ellis

Contributing Editor:
Doug Toft



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391



Brief Contents

- 1** Introduction
The Master Student
- 33** Chapter 1
Discovering Yourself
- 65** Chapter 2
Time
- 109** Chapter 3
Memory
- 137** Chapter 4
Reading
- 173** Chapter 5
Notes
- 207** Chapter 6
Tests
- 241** Chapter 7
Thinking
- 277** Chapter 8
Communicating
- 309** Chapter 9
Relationships
- 343** Chapter 10
Money
- 375** Chapter 11
Career

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403



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Contents

xi Preface

Introduction:

The Master Student

- 2** Power Process: Discover what you want
- 3** Rewrite this book
- 3** **Practicing Critical Thinking 1:** Textbook reconnaissance
- 4** Master student qualities
- 7** **Practicing Critical Thinking 2:** The master student in you
- 8** The master student process—Discovery
- 9** The master student process—Intention
- 10** *Be on the lookout*
- 11** The master student process—Action
- 12** Keep the process alive
- 12** *The secret of student success*
- 13** Get the most from this book
- 14** *Here's the sales pitch*
- 15** Motivation—I'm just not in the mood
- 17** Ways to change a habit
- 20** **Journal Entry 1:** Declare what you want
- 21** *Do you have a minute?*
- 22** **Practicing Critical Thinking 3:** Plan to change a habit
- 23** **Journal Entry 2:** Choosing your purpose

- 24** Making the transition to higher education
- 27** Succeeding as a first-generation student
- 29** **Journal Entry 3:** Commitment
- 30** **Career Connection**
- 31** *65 transferrable skills*
- 32** **Journal Entry 4:** Begin developing transferable skills

chapter **1**

Discovering Yourself

- 34** Power Process: Ideas are tools
- 35** First Step: Truth is a key to mastery
- 37** **Practicing Critical Thinking 4:** Taking the First Step
- 38** The Discovery Wheel
- 42** **Journal Entry 5:** Reflecting on your Discovery Wheel
- 43** Discovering your learning styles
- 44** **Journal Entry 6:** Discovering how you learn from experience
- 45** Learning from experience
- 46** Learning through your senses
- 47** **Journal Entry 7:** Discovering how you learn through your senses
- 49** Expanding your learning styles

- 53** Claim your multiple intelligences
- 54** **Practicing Critical Thinking 5:** Develop your multiple intelligences
- 57** The magic of metacognition
- 58** **Journal Entry 8:** Get back to the big picture about learning styles
- 58** *Master Student Profiles*
- 59** Master Student Profile: Joshua Williams
- 60** **Practice Quiz Chapter 1**
- 61** **Career Connection Chapter 1**
- 63** **Journal Entry 9:** Choosing your mindset

chapter **2**

Time

- 66** Power Process: Be here now
- 67** You've got the time
- 68** Stop procrastination now
- 70** *The seven-step antiprocrastination plan*
- 71** Make choices about multitasking
- 72** **Practicing Critical Thinking 6:** The Time Monitor/Time Plan
- 74** Define your values
- 75** Setting and achieving goals
- 78** **Practicing Critical Thinking 7:** Get real with your goals
- 79** The ABC daily to-do list
- 81** Planning sets you free
- 83** Making time for school as an adult learner
- 85** **Practicing Critical Thinking 8:** Master monthly calendar

- 88** Break it down, get it done: Using a long-term planner
- 91** 25 ways to get the most out of now
- 96** *Setting limits on screen time*
- 97** Making time for health
- 100** **Journal Entry 10:** Taking a First Step about health
- 102** Beyond time management: Stay focused on what matters
- 103** **Journal Entry 11:** Create a not-to-do list
- 104** Master Student Profile: Ramit Sethi
- 105** **Practice Quiz Chapter 2**
- 106** **Career Connection Chapter 2**
- 108** **Journal Entry 12:** Gaining skill at remote work

chapter **3**

Memory

- 110** Power Process: Love your problems
- 111** Your memory and your brain—6 key principles
- 113** **Journal Entry 13:** Reflect on the care and feeding of your brain
- 114** The memory jungle
- 116** 25 memory techniques
- 123** **Practicing Critical Thinking 9:** Use Q-cards to reinforce memory
- 124** Set a trap for your memory
- 124** **Practicing Critical Thinking 10:** Remembering your car keys—or anything else
- 125** Mnemonic devices

- 127 *Making connections in memory-friendly ways*
- 128 Retool your memory
- 129 **Practicing Critical Thinking 11:** Get creative
- 130 Remembering names
- 132 Master Student Profile: José Cordova
- 133 **Practice Quiz Chapter 3**
- 134 **Career Connection Chapter 3**
- 136 **Journal Entry 14:** Creating agendas for key conversations

chapter 4

Reading

- 138 Power Process: Notice your pictures and let them go
- 139 Muscle Reading
- 140 How Muscle Reading works
- 141 Phase 1: Before you read
- 142 Phase 2: While you read
- 143 *Six smart ways to highlight a text*
- 144 Phase 3: After you read
- 146 Muscle Reading—A leaner approach
- 146 Extending Muscle Reading to web pages and e-books
- 147 **Journal Entry 15:** Experiment with Muscle Reading
- 148 Muscle Reading at work
- 149 **Journal Entry 16:** Reflect on your online reading habits
- 150 When reading is tough

- 152 Getting past roadblocks to reading
- 154 *Get SPUNKI with your reading*
- 155 **Practicing Critical Thinking 12:** Plan to complete your reading assignments
- 156 Beyond speed reading: Becoming a flexible reader
- 157 Word power—expanding your vocabulary
- 159 *Checklist: Review these common word parts*
- 160 Mastering the English language
- 162 Developing information literacy
- 167 Master Student Profile: Matias Manzano
- 168 **Practice Quiz Chapter 4**
- 169 **Career Connection Chapter 4**
- 171 **Journal Entry 17:** Reading to power your career

chapter 5

Notes

- 174 Power Process: I create it all
- 175 The note-taking process flows
- 176 Observe: The note-taking process flows
- 177 *What to do when you miss a class*
- 179 **Journal Entry 18:** Create more values from lectures
- 180 Record: The note-taking process flows
- 186 Review: The note-taking process flows
- 187 **Practicing Critical Thinking 13:** Reflect on your review habits

- 188 Turn PowerPoints into powerful notes
- 190 When your instructor talks quickly
- 191 **Practicing Critical Thinking 14:**
Taking notes under pressure
- 191 Taking notes while reading
- 193 *Note this information about your sources*
- 194 Visualize ideas with concept maps
- 197 Taking effective notes for online coursework
- 200 *Taking notes during meetings*
- 201 Master Student Profile: Peyton King
- 202 **Practice Quiz Chapter 5**
- 203 **Career Connection Chapter 5**
- 205 **Journal Entry 19:** Experiment with creating a personal knowledge base
- 221 The high costs of cheating
- 221 *Perils of high-tech cheating*
- 222 Getting ready for math tests
- 226 Studying across the curriculum
- 228 The test isn't over until . . .
- 229 *F is for Feedback*
- 230 Celebrate mistakes
- 231 Notable failures
- 232 Let go of anxiety
- 233 *Have some FUN!*
- 234 **Practicing Critical Thinking 15:**
20 things I like to do
- 235 Master Student Profile: Lalita Booth
- 236 **Practice Quiz Chapter 6**
- 237 **Career Connection Chapter 6**
- 239 **Journal Entry 22:** Change your experience of performance reviews

chapter 6

Tests

- 208 Power Process: Detach
- 209 Think beyond the grade
- 210 What to do before the test
- 211 *How to cram (even though you "shouldn't")*
- 212 **Journal Entry 20:** Explore your feelings about tests
- 213 Ways to predict test questions
- 214 **Journal Entry 21:** Notice your excuses and let them go
- 215 Cooperative learning: Studying in groups
- 217 What to do during the test
- 218 *Words to watch for in essay questions*

chapter 7

Thinking

- 242 Power Process: Embrace the new
- 243 Critical thinking: A survival skill
- 245 Six kinds of thinking
- 248 A process for critical thinking
- 251 **Practicing Critical Thinking 16:**
Explore emotional reactions
- 252 Don't fool yourself: Common mistakes in logic
- 254 **Practicing Critical Thinking 17:**
Critical thinking scenarios

- 256 Finding “aha!”—Creativity fuels critical thinking
- 256 *Tangram*
- 257 Ways to create ideas
- 260 **Journal Entry 23:** Use divergent thinking to brainstorm goals
- 261 **Journal Entry 24:** Use convergent thinking to plan habits
- 262 *Create on your feet*
- 262 Gaining skill at decision making
- 264 Four ways to solve problems
- 265 Asking questions—Learning through inquiry
- 267 *15 questions to try on for size*
- 268 Thinking about your major
- 271 Master Student Profile: Tran Pham
- 272 **Practice Quiz Chapter 7**
- 273 **Career Connection Chapter 7**
- 275 **Journal Entry 25:** Exercise your idea muscle

chapter 8

Communicating

- 278 Power Process: Employ your word
- 279 Three phases of effective writing
- 283 *Befriend your writing app*
- 284 **Journal Entry 26:** Exploring your feelings about writing
- 285 Academic integrity: Avoid plagiarism
- 287 Mastering public speaking
- 290 *Speaking professionally at work*

- 292 Six principles of persuasion
- 293 **Practicing Critical Thinking 18:** Using the principles of persuasion
- 294 Creating effective content for online audiences
- 297 Creating a personal website
- 298 Communicating in teams—Getting things done as a group
- 301 *Making the grade in group presentations*
- 302 *Using technology to collaborate*
- 303 Master Student Profile: Chimamanda Adichie
- 304 **Practice Quiz Chapter 8**
- 305 **Career Connection Chapter 8**
- 307 **Journal Entry 27:** Recreate your experience of meetings

chapter 9

Relationships

- 310 Power Process: Choose your conversations
- 311 Communication—Keeping the channels open
- 311 **Practicing Critical Thinking 19:** Practice sending or receiving
- 312 Choosing to listen
- 316 Choosing to speak
- 318 *Fives ways to say “I”*
- 319 **Practicing Critical Thinking 20:** Write an “I” message
- 319 **Journal Entry 28:** Discover communication styles

- 320** Developing emotional intelligence
- 322** Managing conflict
- 324** **Journal Entry 29:** Recreate a relationship
- 325** Five ways to say *no . . .* respectfully
- 326** **Practicing Critical Thinking 21:** VIPs (Very Important Persons)
- 327** Five steps to effective complaints
- 327** *Criticism is constructive*
- 328** Communicating with instructors
- 331** Diversity is real and valuable
- 333** Communicating across cultures
- 335** *Students with disabilities: Ask for what you want*
- 336** *You deserve compliments*
- 337** Master Student Profile: Raheema Jones Howard
- 338** **Practice Quiz Chapter 9**
- 339** **Career Connection Chapter 9**
- 341** **Journal Entry 30:** Expressing authentic appreciation

chapter **10**

Money

- 344** Power Process: Risk being a fool
- 345** The end of money worries
- 346** **Practicing Critical Thinking 22:** The Money Monitor/Money Plan
- 347** **Journal Entry 31:** Reflect on your experience of money
- 348** *No budgeting required*

- 348** **Journal Entry 32:** Reflect on your Money Monitor/Money Plan
- 349** Make more money
- 352** Spend less money
- 354** *Free fun*
- 355** **Practicing Critical Thinking 23:** Show me the money
- 356** Managing money during tough times
- 358** Take charge of your credit
- 360** *Common credit terms*
- 362** **Journal Entry 33:** Create new experience of money
- 362** *If you get into trouble . . .*
- 363** Education pays off—and you can pay for it
- 364** **Practicing Critical Thinking 24:** Education by the hour
- 365** Money for the future
- 367** Use tools to tame your money
- 369** Your money and your values
- 370** Master Student Profile: Stephanie McGuire
- 371** **Practice Quiz Chapter 10**
- 372** **Career Connection Chapter 10**
- 374** **Journal Entry 34:** Developing financial literacy for your career

chapter **11**

Career

- 376** Power Process: Persist
- 377** Nine ways to think about your career

381	Expand your skills	409	Journal Entry 35: Revisiting your Discovery Wheels
383	Practicing Critical Thinking 25: Recognize and develop your skills	410	Transferring to a new school
385	Discover the hidden job market	413	Master Student Profile: Eric Jorgenson
387	Start writing your résumé	414	Practice Quiz Chapter 11
389	Start to develop interviewing skills	415	Career Connection Chapter 11
391	Tools for lifelong learning	417	Journal Entry 36: Long-term planning for college and career success
392	Learning on the job		
395	Creating a personal development plan		
396	Put your health to work		
398	Developing a strong work ethic	423	Endnotes
401	Create a workflow that works	426	Additional Reading
403	Join a diverse workplace	428	Glossary
405	<i>The Discovery Wheel—Coming full circle</i>	433	Index

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.

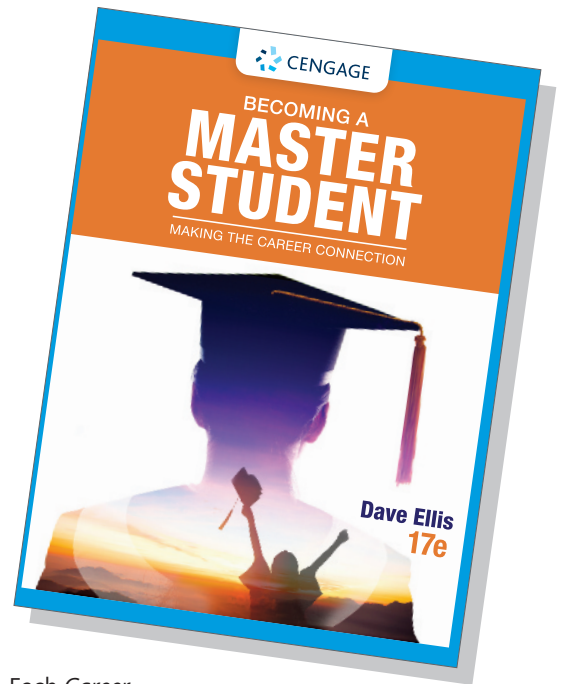
We are grateful to the numerous invaluable reviewers who shared their feedback, experiences, suggestions, and insights to help bring about this new edition. You have kept us abreast of current research and trends in college success, equipping us to serve the ever-evolving needs of first year students.

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:

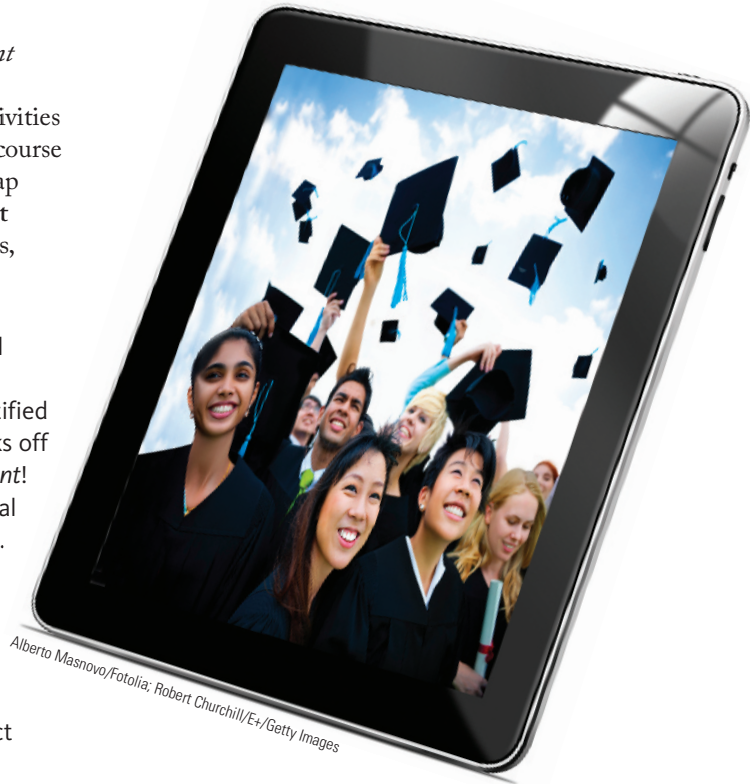
- **New article:** The *College Success Glossary* defines key terms used in the text.
- **Revised elements:** *Additional Reading*, *Endnotes*, and *Index* are updated for this new edition. ❖



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. ✦



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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