

Sharon K. Ferrett

Peak Performance

SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND BEYOND

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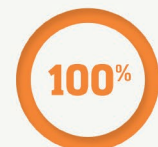
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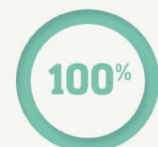
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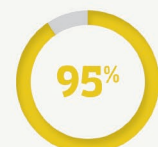
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Peak Performance

tenth edition SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND BEYOND

Sharon K. Ferrett, Ph.D.
Humboldt State University



Dedication

To the memory of my parents, Albert Lawrence Ferrett and Velma Mary Hollenbeck Ferrett, for setting the highest standards and their seamless expression of love.

To my husband, Sam, and our daughters, Jennifer and Sarah; all teachers, they've tried out exercises and offered valuable suggestions. With thanks and love.

—Sharon K. Ferrett



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The 10th Edition

This is a revision ten editions in the making! We pulled out all the stops to commemorate ten editions of teaching students how to reach their peak performance and succeed in school and life.

The 10th edition of Peak Performance continues to provide students with common-sense strategies for excelling in school and life. Peak Performance delivers the essential tools for managing time and resources by showing students how to

- Empower themselves to feel that they belong in college and that the tools for success are all around them
- Learn how habits work and how to replace counter-productive habits with positive habits that will help them in college and beyond
- Learn to integrate all learning styles for maximum success
- Learn how to seek out support and resources on campus for challenges new students face, and remain persistent in pursuit of their goals
- Relate what they are exploring now to future success on the job
- Strive to cultivate the qualities, habits, and skills of peak performers

Global Updates and New Features

- **Habits:** Instructors told us students want to succeed in college and beyond, but sometimes they need help implementing the skills taught

in class. Therefore **Building Better Habits** is a major focus in the 10th edition. This feature will help students implement the skills and concepts they learn in class. The Habit Cycle will teach students how to identify triggers for their habits and how to create a productive behavior routine and a reward that leads to a cycle of success. This feature is based on actual brain science and is threaded throughout the book, with a new habit introduced in every chapter. Each habit relates to a critical topic such as health, time management, note taking, studying, test taking, and many others.

- **Learning Styles:** Instructors have said that not all students learn the same. While we've always covered learning styles, in this 10th edition we've expanded our coverage of this topic with our coverage of **VARK** throughout the book. VARK, which explains the visual, auditory, writing-reading, and kinesthetic learning styles, is covered in more depth in the 10th edition than in previous editions. We also now apply this tool to our Peak Progress boxes in every chapter.
- **Adult Learning Cycle:** The Adult Learning Cycle is explained in greater depth with examples that highlight each chapter's concepts. It is also integrated with VARK so that students can see how important it is to use all their senses and learning styles to learn new ideas and concepts.
- **Personal Evaluation Notebook Activities:** Instructors told us they love these activities, and so we have expanded on them. Wherever applicable, we have added additional context or

mini-rubrics so that students can easily apply what they learn in these features.

- **Expanded and Updated Research:** Instructors told us they want to be sure they are using the latest research focused on learning and the brain. We have integrated the latest brain research throughout the book to help students see the “why” behind the concepts and practical advice.
- Based on instructor feedback, we revamped some of our feature boxes. Think Fast is now **Think Creatively and Critically**; Take 3 is now **Leverage Your Success**. We’ve introduced a new box, **Get Involved**, to help students feel they belong and address challenges that sometimes lead to unfinished degrees.
- **Think Creatively and Critically:** Instructors told us that creative thinking is becoming just as important as critical thinking. We’ve updated and expanded our coverage of both. This feature asks students to apply their creative and critical thinking skills to specific scenarios and references pertinent scientific research.
- **Leverage Your Success:** Instructors told us that students feel daunted by many of the tasks they face in college. Each feature box will present examples to help students see that by putting in 20% effort, they can increase their success by 80% and leverage their success.
- **Get Involved:** Instructors told us students often feel overwhelmed by college and aren’t sure how to seek out friends, resources, and advice. This can often lead to unfinished degrees. These features give students practical advice about getting involved in clubs and campus events, as well as connecting with students, tutors, advisers, and instructors.
- **Streamlined Layout:** We’ve adopted a “cleaner,” lighter design and layout to better facilitate ease of reading.
- Our **Connect** product includes a chapter-specific video series highlighting time management, goal setting, reading, note taking, and other critical topics.

Sampling of New and Revised Topics

CHAPTER 1: BE A LIFELONG LEARNER

- Expanded VAK to VARK and expanded discussion of how each of these learning styles affects students.

- Updated coverage of creativity skills, Myers-Briggs, personality types, and learning styles.
- Updates to features such as Personal Evaluation Notebooks and the Adult Learning Cycle.

CHAPTER 2: BUILD PEAK HABITS

- We rebuilt this chapter from the ground up.
- This chapter now teaches students about the key pieces of a habit, how to change them, and how to build better habits for success in college and beyond.
- The Habit Cycle appears in every chapter and teaches students how to build better habits related to better health and coping with challenges such as homesickness, time management, note taking, studying, test taking, and many other common challenges.

CHAPTER 3: EXPAND YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Updated content on Maslow’s hierarchy.
- Additional strategies for better emotional intelligence.
- Expanded EQ research including Coleman’s research.
- An increased emphasis on commitment and persistence in achieving your goals.

CHAPTER 4: MANAGE YOUR TIME

- Additional strategies for managing time and fighting procrastination.
- Updated discussion of technology related to time management and planning.

CHAPTER 5: MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES

- Expanded discussion of how to seek out resources on campus.
- Additional coverage of money management.

CHAPTER 6: LISTEN AND TAKE EFFECTIVE NOTES

- Better habits for better note taking.
- Expanded coverage of active listening.

CHAPTER 7: ACTIVELY READ

- Additional reading strategies for better focus and attention.
- Updated discussion of technology and its impact on reading and learning.

CHAPTER 8: IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY SKILLS

- Updated coverage of memory research and how to improve memory.
- Updated discussion of the role of technology.

CHAPTER 9: EXCEL AT TAKING TESTS

- Updated discussion of study strategies.
- Expanded coverage of technology and how to use it to prepare for tests.
- Expanded coverage of dealing with test-taking anxiety.

CHAPTER 10: EXPRESS YOURSELF IN WRITING AND SPEECH

- Expanded coverage of information literacy and how to evaluate sources.
- Expanded coverage of doing online research.
- Deals with speaking anxiety.

CHAPTER 11: BECOME A CRITICAL THINKER AND CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVER

- Fully updated discussion of Bloom’s Taxonomy.
- Revamped discussion of creative thinking and problem solving.
- Expanded discussion of critical thinking.

CHAPTER 12: CREATE A HEALTHY MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

- Updated health strategies for mind, body, and spirit.
- Expanded coverage for stress prevention and coping strategies.
- Expanded strategies for general health and improved eating.
- Expanded discussion regarding the importance of sleep and rest.
- Expanded coverage of emotional health, depression, and suicide prevention.
- Added overcoming health obstacles with better habits.

CHAPTER 13: BUILD SUPPORTIVE AND DIVERSE RELATIONSHIPS

- Updated discussion of key relationships.
- Expanded coverage of habits related to strong relationships.

CHAPTER 14: EXPLORE MAJORS AND CAREERS

- Expanded discussion of choosing a major.
- Expanded coverage of choosing careers and preparing for job hunts.
- Updated coverage of technology and its applicability for job searches.
- Expanded discussion of how to take control of your career when getting started.

Peak Performance Features

Every chapter includes the following features. These features were written and designed to help students apply, practice, and better understand the core concepts explored in each chapter.

Chapter Features

Habit Cycles

Building Better Habits is a major focus in the 10th edition and is included in every chapter. The Habit Cycle will teach students how to identify the things that trigger their bad (and good) habits, how to create a positive routine behavior, and how to identify a reward that leads to a cycle of success.



Personal Evaluation Notebooks

The PEN exercises are a chance for students to evaluate what they have learned in the chapter up to that point, and apply it so that they are better prepared to move on to the next topic in the chapter.

Being Observant

Try the following experiments to determine if you are really observing the world around you.

EXPERIMENT 1

1. Look around the room.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Mentally picture what is in the room.
4. Open your eyes.
5. Now take in the room slowly.

If you missed several items, reflect on what they were and the possible causes. Were you distracted? Were you focused on only one item? What can you do to bring your mind back and be more alert?

Peak Progress

The Peak Progress exercises in every chapter help students create the results they want by encouraging

*them to consider and practice key concepts. They will learn new strategies, helpful tips, and how to apply the **Adult Learning Cycle** and the **ABC Method of Self-Management**.*

Peak Progress

1.1

The ABC Method of Self-Management

Earlier in this chapter, you answered some questions to determine if you approach everyday life with a positive attitude. Researchers believe that positive, optimistic thinking improves your skills for coping with challenges, which may also benefit your overall health and minimize the effects of stress.

Self-management can be as easy as ABC. These simple steps help you manage your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, so that you can create the results you want.

A = Actual event: State the actual situation that triggered your emotions. Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings.

B = Beliefs: Describe your thoughts and beliefs about the situation that created these emotions and behavior. Breathe deeply so that you create space for reflection and to become calm and focused.

C = Challenge: Dispute the negative thoughts and replace them with accurate and positive statements. Creatively choose the most positive and appropriate response.

In the end-of-chapter **Worksheets** throughout this text, you will find opportunities to practice the ABC Method of Self-Management.

Research has shown that one of the brain structures that suffers the most damage from stress and anxiety is the hippocampus, which is critical for learning and memory. Test taking can be extremely stressful for some students.¹

Silas failed his midterm. He thought he had studied enough before the test, but he quickly realized he should have paid more attention to the online readings. He was so anxious that his mind went blank when he tried to formulate an answer to the essay question that was worth 50 percent of the total exam.

- What questions could he have asked his instructor before the test to clarify expectations?
- What could Silas have done as he started the essay section to help him formulate his thoughts?
- How could taking practice tests and working with a study team help Silas?

THINK CREATIVELY AND CRITICALLY

Sometimes it is little things that make a big difference. Take a few minutes throughout the day to do simple things to leverage your success. You could write a brief, one-paragraph summary after class. Here are a few more ideas; add to them:

- What were the main points and key words in the lecture?
- What examples were given?
- What parts are unclear? Who can I call for clarification?

What else can you do in a few minutes that can increase your success?

- Compare your summary to the chapter outline or review with a classmate or study group.

LEVERAGE *Your* SUCCESS

Learning to write at a college level can be quite challenging. The good news is your campus is set up to help you. This skill will help you in all your classes and in your career.

- Many campuses even have a version of a “writing center”—an office on campus with tutors and volunteers to help you revise your papers and improve your writing. If your campus has one of these, be sure to check it out and make use of it.
- Seek out instructor support and advice early on.
- Identify friends and classmates who are strong writers and learn from them.
- Join a writing group or attend a writing workshop or retreat.

GET *involved*

Think Creatively and Critically

These features provide situations to help students think in creative ways and apply critical thinking skills. Each feature also includes scientific research pertaining to the example.

Leverage Your Success

These “Leverage” features expand on the 80/20 principle that illustrates how small steps can result in big payoffs, helping students face the daunting task of beginning college.

Get Involved

New college students often feel overwhelmed. Student retention and academic performance have been shown to increase when students get involved on campus and are able to identify helpful resources. These feature boxes help students identify these resources and feel that they belong in college.

End-of-Chapter Features

Taking Charge

The Taking Charge feature is an opportunity for students to review what they’ve learned and prepare for assessments.

Career in Focus

In each chapter, these workplace case studies help students understand the practical applications of the chapter by applying what they’ve learned to a career situation.

Peak Performer

Each Peak Performer Profile highlights people who have demonstrated the qualities, attitudes, and skills of a Peak Performer. Students are asked critical thinking questions that pertain to Peak Performer and his or her success.

Review and Applications

Practice is a core concept in this book. It is not enough to read about successful strategies. This feature will help students choose one strategy to change. This reinforces the power of taking small changes.

Case Studies

Throughout this book we have tried to highlight the connection between college success and career success. This feature provides a college-based case study and then connects the same strategies to a career-based case study. Students will see that the strategies that make them successful in college will make them successful in their careers.

Worksheets

These worksheets provide the opportunity to apply chapter concepts. At the end of each chapter, students will take the next step from theoretical concepts to practical application.

Career Development Portfolio

These activities help the student to connect what they've learned in a chapter to what they may want from a career or what they will need to do as they are building a career.

Ancillaries

Connect

CONNECT[®] offers a number of powerful tools and features to make managing assignments easier, so faculty can spend more time teaching. With Connect, students can engage with their coursework anytime and anywhere, making the learning process more accessible and efficient.

Learnsmart

LearnSmart is an adaptive study tool proven to strengthen memory recall, increase class retention, and boost grades. Students are able to study more efficiently because they are made aware of what they know and don't know. Real-time reports quickly identify the concepts that require more attention from individual students—or the entire class.

Smartbook

SmartBook is the first and only adaptive reading experience designed to change the way students read and learn. It creates a personalized reading experience by highlighting the most impactful concepts a student needs to learn at that moment in time. As a student engages with SmartBook, the reading experience continuously adapts by highlighting

content based on what the student knows and doesn't know. This ensures that the focus is on the content he or she needs to learn, while simultaneously promoting long-term retention of material. Use SmartBook's real-time reports to quickly identify the concepts that require more attention from individual students—or the entire class. The end result? Students are more engaged with course content, can better prioritize their time, and can be prepared to participate.

Lassi: Learning and Study Strategies Inventory

The LASSI is a 10-scale, 60-item assessment of students' awareness about and use of learning and study strategies related to skill, will, and self-regulation components of strategic learning. The focus is on both covert and overt thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that relate to successful learning and that can be altered through educational interventions. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that these factors contribute significantly to success in college and that they can be learned or enhanced through educational interventions such as learning and study skills courses.

The LASSI is available in print or online at www.ihpublishing.com. Ask your McGraw-Hill Education sales representative for more details.

Annotated Instructor's Edition

The AIE contains the full text of the student edition of the text, along with instructional strategies that reinforce and enhance the core concepts. Notes and tips in the margin provide topics for discussion, teaching tips for hands-on and group activities, and suggestions for further reading.

Instructor Resources

Located in Connect, these extensive resources include chapter goals and outlines, teaching tips, additional activities, and essay exercises. Also included are unique resource guides that give instructors and administrators the tools to retain students and maximize the success of the course, using topics and principles that last a lifetime. Resources include:

- Instructor Manual
- Retention Kit, containing:
 - Facilitator's Guide
 - Tools for Time Management

- Establishing Peer Support Groups
- Developing a Career Portfolio
- Involving the Faculty Strategy
- Capitalizing on Your School's Graduates
- Course Planning Guide
- Sample Syllabi
- PowerPoints
- Testbank—includes matching, multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions

Customize Your Text

Peak Performance *can be customized to suit your needs. The text can be abbreviated for shorter courses and can be expanded to include school schedules, campus maps, additional essays, activities, or exercises, along with other materials specific to your curriculum. However you want to customize, we can make it happen, easily. McGraw-Hill Education can deliver a book that perfectly meets your needs. Contact your McGraw-Hill Education sales representative for more information or:*

United States: 1-800-338-3987

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Joseph Selvaggio	Three Rivers Community College	Christopher Old	Sierra College
Michael Abernethy	Indiana University Southeast	Lisa Marie Kerr	Auburn University at Montgomery
Jean Buckley-Lockhart	LaGuardia Community College	Remona Hammonds	Miami-Dade College–West Campus
Jane M. McGinn, Ph. D	Southern Connecticut State University	Sarah Strout	Dominican College
Christine M. ViPond	Lord Fairfax Community College		
Ami Massengill	Nashville State Community College–Cookeville Campus		
Kevin Ploeger	University of Cincinnati		
Keith Bunting	Randolph Community College		
Laura Skinner	Wayne Community College		
Mary Lee Vance	Purdue University Calumet		

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—Sharon K. Ferrett

SCANS: Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills

Competency Chart

Competencies and Foundations	Peak Performance Chapters That Address SCANS Competencies
Resources: Identifies, Organizes, Plans, and Allocates Resources	
• Managing time	Chapter 4, Leverage Your Success
• Managing money	Chapter 5
• Managing space	Chapters 2, 4
• Managing people	Chapters 3, 13
• Managing materials	Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 10
• Managing facilities	Chapters 5, 6, 10, 12
Information: Acquires and Uses Information	
• Acquiring information	Chapters 5, 6, 7, 10
• Evaluating information	Chapters 8, 9, 10
• Organizing and maintaining information	Chapters 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, Leverage Your Success
• Using computer to process	Chapters 5, 10
Systems: Understands Complex Interrelationships	
• Understanding systems	All chapters
• Designing systems	Chapters 6, 7
• Monitoring systems	Chapters 4, 6, 7, 12
• Correcting systems	Chapters 4, 5, 6, 11
Interpersonal Skills: Works with Others	
• Positive attitudes	Chapters 2, 3, 13
• Self-control	Chapters 2, 3, 13
• Goal setting	Chapters 1, 3, 4, 3
• Teamwork	Chapters 2, 3, 13
• Responsibility	Chapters 2, 3, 13
• Stress management	Chapter 12
Technology: Works with a Variety of Technologies	
• Selecting technology	Chapters 10, 14, Tech for Success
• Applying technology	Chapters 5, 10, 14, Tech for Success
• Maintaining technology	Chapters 10, 14
• Solving problems	Chapters 10, 11
• Staying current in technology	Chapters 5, 10, 14

Source: United States Department of Labor, 1992.

SCANS: Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills *(concluded)*

Competencies and Foundations

Peak Performance Chapters That Address SCANS Competencies

Personal Qualities

- Responsibility, character, integrity, positive habits, self-management, self-esteem, sociability Chapters 2, 3, 13

Basic Skills

- Reading—locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents, such as manuals, graphs, and schedules Chapters 7, 10
- Writing—communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing and creates documents, such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flowcharts Chapter 10
- Arithmetic/mathematics—performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques Chapter 11
- Listening—receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues Chapters 6, 13

Thinking Skills

- Creative thinking—generates new ideas Chapter 11, Personal Evaluation Notebooks, Think Creatively and Critically
- Decision making—specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative Chapter 11, Case Study, Personal Evaluation Notebooks, Think Creatively and Critically
- Listening—receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues Chapters 6, 13
- Seeing things in the mind’s eye—organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information All chapters, with a strong emphasis in Chapter 11
- Knowing how to learn—uses efficient learning techniques to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills Chapter 1
- Reasoning—discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it when solving a problem Chapter 11

Dear Student

Many of my students have told me I'm like a cheerleader, rooting them on to success. I know they all have what it takes to succeed, even when they have their own doubts. Why? Because I've been there, too. As I stepped onto the beautiful University of Michigan campus, I questioned whether I belonged. My small farming community seemed far away and I felt out of place. Many students had come from fancy prep schools and wealthy families. I had gone to a one-room schoolhouse and then to a tiny high school in the thumb of Michigan. I was putting myself through college with part-time jobs and baby-sitting in exchange for room and board. *Would I be able to make it here? Did I belong? I thought back to a time in high school when I also questioned whether I belonged. I had learned to overcome an intense fear of public speaking and ended up on the debate team. I decided to apply the same positive habits that helped me to feel confident in front of people.*

I felt that same fear when I entered a Ph.D. program at Michigan State University. I was surrounded by smart, confident scholars who had graduated from excellent schools. *Did I belong here?* I looked at my habits and personal qualities and realized that my experiences as a farm kid made me a hard worker and persistent, I knew that no amount of effort was too great to achieve the goal of graduating. I was incredibly grateful for the opportunity to be admitted to a competitive graduate program. I wanted to make my parents proud because they never had the choices that I had. I practiced positive thinking and positive habits and visualized myself as a college graduate. I held that image firmly in my mind whenever I was discouraged.

I returned to our farming community and taught for a year in the same one-room schoolhouse that I (and my father) had attended. It was my mission to encourage the students to develop their full potential and set high goals. I believed in them and told them that they could succeed in college. *"You belong,"* I said often. They all had the same work ethic that I had and that discipline would serve them well. From there I went on to teach in college. Over the years, I have had many students

who wondered if they belonged in college. I assured them that they did indeed belong and cheered them on to graduate.

I would have never dreamed of being a college professor and an administrator when I was in high school, but, at only 24 years old, I accepted a dean

position at Delta College, a large community college in Michigan. A few years later, I moved to California as Dean of Continuing Education at Humboldt State University. I developed a new program in student success. That project launched this book and became my life's work. Over the years, I have had several students who wondered if they belonged in college. I helped them replace negative thoughts and behavior with positive habits. I watched them become confident and engaged students. I felt I was on the brink of something important. I was. Over the years I have seen the power of habits and how they change lives.

Throughout this book, we talk about the attributes of a "peak performer" and attempt to define success—in school, career, and life. However, in the end, *you* have to define success for yourself. Only you can determine what drives you, what makes you happy, and what will become your own life's work. What I know for sure is that your habits should support your goals.

If I could give you only three pieces of advice as you journey to find your passion in life, they would be

- 1. Acknowledge and pay attention.** Create quiet time every day to focus on your inner experiences of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Awake to nature and be observant of your surroundings. Success comes from a clear focus on what you value most. Don't complicate your life with unnecessary distractions. *Learn to focus and be mindful and grateful for your opportunities.*



2. Be your own best friend. Create positive habits that support your goals and use the whole of your intelligence. Realize you are smarter than you think. Intelligence is not defined by a score on a test but rather by how you use all your experiences, abilities, resources, and opportunities to create opportunities and support your mind and body. *Keep it simple* and focus on one change. For example, exercise everyday and you will find that this one habit spills over into other areas of your life. You will be more positive and become your own cheerleader.

3. Create ways to engage and connect with people. You will feel that you belong in school and at work when you relate well with others and build friendships and positive relationships. *Engage* in clubs, music, theater, athletics, and other events and connect with others who have similar experiences. Getting involved and making friends helps create a sense of belonging and well-being.

And when you need a little help developing your own “cheer” along the way, please drop me an e-mail at sharonferrett@gmail.com. *I believe in you!*

—Sharon K. Ferrett

Getting Started

Congratulations! You are about to start or restart an amazing journey of opportunity, growth, and adventure. You may be at this point in your life for a number of reasons: You may be furthering your education right after high school; you may be focusing on a specific career or trade and want to acquire the appropriate skills or certification; or you may be returning to school after years in the workforce, needing additional skills or just looking for a change.

Whatever your reasons, this is an opportunity for you to learn new things, meet new people, acquire new skills, and better equip yourself both professionally and personally for the years ahead. This book is designed to get you started on that journey by helping you (1) learn how you learn best—and incorporate new ways to learn; (2) maximize available resources and seek out new opportunities; (3) relate what you are exploring now to future success on the job; and (4) strive to become the best person you can be.

Now that you have your book in hand, you are ready to get started. Or are you really ready? What else should you be aware of at this point? You may have already attended a basic orientation session where you learned about school and community resources and program requirements. Going through orientation, meeting with your advisor, and reviewing your catalog will help you get oriented. Additionally, this quick review is designed to outline the essentials that you will want to know, so that you not only survive but also make your first year a success. Peak Progress 1 provides a handy checklist for the essential tasks you



need to consider and accomplish the first week of school. Add to this list any tasks that are unique to your situation or school.

Tasks to Accomplish the First Week of School

- Attend orientation and meet with an advisor. Ask questions and determine available resources. (See **Peak Progress 2** for questions to ask.)
- Register and pay fees on time.
- Set up an e-mail account and check it daily.
- Check deadlines and procedures. *Never* just quit going to class.
- Buy books and keep receipts. Establish a record-keeping system.
- Find out the location of classrooms, parking, and school resources.
- Know expectations and requirements. Get a syllabus for each class. E-mail instructors for clarification.
- Create an organized study area. Post instructors' names, office locations, and hours, as well as important deadlines.
- Form study teams and exchange e-mails and phone numbers. Get to know instructors and other students.
- Explore resources, such as the library, learning skills center, health center, and advising center.
- Go to all classes on time and sit in the front row.

Why Are You Here?

College success begins with determining your goals and mapping out a plan. A good place to start is to reflect on why you are in college and what is expected of you. You will be more motivated if you clarify your interests and values concerning college. You will read in Chapter 3 the reasons students don't graduate from college, including juggling multiple responsibilities, having poor study skills and habits, and lacking preparation, motivation, and effort. College is a commitment of many precious resources you can't afford to waste—time, money, and mental energies. Consider the following statements and your reasons for being in college, and share this in your study team or with students you meet the first few weeks of class:

- I value education and want to be a well-educated person.
- I want to get a good job that leads to a well-paying career.
- I want to learn new ideas and skills and grow personally and professionally.
- I want to get away from home and be independent.

- I want to make new friends.
- I want to have new experiences and stretch myself.
- I want to fulfill my goal of being a college-educated person.

Jot down what you want from college and why you're motivated to get it.

List four values that are most important to you and how college will help you achieve them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What You Need to Know and Should Not Be Afraid to Ask

You don't want to learn the hard way that you need one more class to graduate, only to find it's offered only once a year (and you just missed it). Make your time with your advisor productive by getting answers to important questions that will help you map out your coursework. Peak Progress 2 provides a handy checklist of common questions to get you started.

What Do You Need to Do to Graduate?

You will be more motivated and confident if you understand graduation requirements. Requirements vary among schools. Don't rely on the advice of friends. Go to orientation and meet with your advisor early and often. Check out the catalog and make certain you know what is required to graduate. Fill in the following:

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- Number of units required:
- General education requirements:
- Curriculum requirements:
- Residency at the school:
- Departmental major requirements:
- Cumulative GPA required:
- Other requirements, such as special writing tests and classes:

How to Register for Classes

Find out if you have an access code and the earliest date you can register. Meet with your advisor, carefully select classes, and review general education and major requirements. Add electives that keep you active and interested. Make certain that you understand why you are taking each class, and check with your advisor that it is meeting certain requirements.

Many colleges have a purge date and, if you miss the deadline to pay your fees, your class schedule is canceled. You may not be able to get into classes and may have to pay a late fee.

Know the Grading System

Learn the minimum grade point average (GPA) that you need to maintain good standing. If your GPA falls below 2.0, you may be placed on academic probation.

The GPA is calculated according to the number of credit hours each course represents and your grade in the course. In the traditional system, A = 4 points, B = 3 points, C = 2 points, D = 1 point, and F = 0 points (your school may have a different system, so ask to be sure). To calculate your GPA, first determine your total number of points. Following is an example:

Course	Grade Achieved	Number of Credit Hours	Points
Political Science	C	2	$2 \times 2 = 4$
Psychology	B	3	$3 \times 3 = 9$
English	A	3	$4 \times 3 = 12$
Personal Finance	A	1	$4 \times 1 = 4$
TOTAL		9	29

Then, to arrive at your GPA, you must divide your total points by your total number of credit hours:

$$\text{GPA} = \text{total points divided by total number of credit hours}$$

Thus, in this example,

$$\text{GPA} = 29 \text{ divided by } 9 = 3.22$$

Monitor your progress and meet with your instructors often, but especially at midterm and before final exams. Ask what you can do to improve your grade.

Adding or Dropping Classes

Ask about the deadlines for adding and dropping classes. This is generally done in the first few weeks of classes. A withdrawal after the deadline could result in a failing grade. Also, make certain before you drop the class that

- You will not fall below the required units for financial aid.
- You will not fall below the required units for playing sports.
- If required, the class is offered again before you plan to graduate.
- You don't need the class or units to meet graduation requirements.
- You are meeting important deadlines.
- You talk with the instructor first.
- You talk with your advisor.

The Most Common Questions Students Ask Advisors

1. What classes do I need to take for general education?
2. Can a course satisfy both a general education and a major requirement?
3. Can I take general elective (GE) courses for Credit/No Credit if I also want to count them for my major?
4. How can I remove an F grade from my record?
5. What is the deadline for dropping courses?
6. Can I drop a course after the deadline?
7. What is an “educational leave”?
8. What is the difference between a withdrawal and a drop?
9. Do I need to take any placement tests?
10. Are there other graduation requirements, such as a writing exam?
11. Where do I find out about financial aid?
12. Is there a particular order in which I should take certain courses?
13. Are there courses in which I must earn a C– or better?
14. How do I change my major?
15. Which of my transfer courses will count?
16. What is the minimum residency requirement for a bachelor’s degree?
17. Is there a GPA requirement for the major?
18. Is there a tutoring program available?
19. If I go on exchange, how do I make sure that courses I take at another university will apply toward my degree here?
20. What is a major contract, and when should I get one?
21. When do I need to apply for graduation?
22. How do I apply for graduation?
23. What is a degree check?
24. What is the policy for incomplete grades?
25. Can I take major courses at another school and transfer them here?
26. As a nonresident, how can I establish residency in this state?
27. How do I petition to substitute a class?
28. Once I complete my major, are there other graduation requirements?
29. What is academic probation?
30. Is there any employment assistance available?
31. Is there a mentor program available in my major department?
32. Are there any internships or community service opportunities related to my major?

Never simply walk away from your classes. The instructor will not drop you, nor will you be dropped automatically if you stop going to class at any time during the semester. It is your responsibility to follow up and complete required forms.

An Incomplete Grade

If you miss class due to illness or an emergency, you may be able to take an incomplete if you can’t finish a project or you missed a test. Check out this option with your instructor before you drop a class. Sign a written agreement to finish the work at a specific time and stay in touch with the instructor through e-mail and by phone.

Withdrawing or Taking a Leave of Absence

Some students withdraw because they don’t have the money, they can’t take time off from work, they lack child care, or they are having difficulty in classes. Before you drop out of college, talk with your advisor and see if you can get the support and motivation to succeed. If you want to take a leave to travel, want to explore other schools, are ill, or just need to take a break, make certain that you take a leave of absence for a semester, a year, or longer. Taking a leave means that you do not have to reapply for admission, and generally you fall under the same category as when you entered school.

Transferring

Before you transfer to another school, know the requirements, which courses are transferable, and if there is a residency requirement. If you plan to transfer from a two-year school to a four-year school, your advisor will help you clarify the requirements.

Expectations of Professors

Most professors will hand out a syllabus that outlines their expectations for the class. Understand and clarify those expectations and the course requirements right from the first day of class. **Worksheet 1** is a convenient guide to complete when checking your progress with your instructor. Complete a similar form for each class. You'll want to have contact information about your professor, office hours, location of office, etc. Every week or so reflect on how you're doing in every class and develop a relationship with your professors so that you are known as a serious student who wants to excel. Continually assess how you're doing and make adjustments as necessary. Reflect, assess, and adjust. This takes just a small amount of time and effort, but can result in big returns such as a meaningful relationship, clarification, and a better grade. It is also an excellent habit to get into for job success. Knowing your supervisor's expectations and checking deadlines, goals, progress, and ways to improve job performance are vital for peak performance.

The Best Strategies for Success in School

In this text, we will focus on a number of strategies that will help you determine and achieve your goals. **The Best Strategies for Success in School** provides a comprehensive list of the proven strategies you will find woven throughout this text. Apply these to your efforts in school now and through your course of study. You will find that not only are they key to your progress in school, but also they will help you develop skills, behaviors, and habits that are directly related to success on the job and in life in general.

Commitment

The best strategies in the world can't help you if you're not committed to acquiring new skills and creating positive long-lasting habits. Reflect on how committed you are to succeeding in college and in life. Are you just going to skim through this book or are you going to dig out key points, reflect on concepts, practice creating positive habits, and do the exercises? Take the challenge: go to class; read; reflect; write; experiment; and engage and connect with professors, other students, and campus activities. If you're committed and willing to learn new ideas and change your habits, you're on your way to being a peak performer.

The Best Strategies for Success in School

1. **Attend every class.** Going to every class engages you with the subject, the instructor, and other students. Think of the tuition you are paying and what it costs to cut a class.
2. **Be an active participant.** Show that you are engaged and interested by being on time, sitting in front, participating, asking questions, and being alert.
3. **Go to class prepared.** Preview all reading assignments. Highlight key ideas and main concepts, and put question marks next to anything you don't understand.
4. **Write a summary.** After you preview the chapter, close the book and write a short summary. Go back and fill in with more details. Do this after each reading.
5. **Know your instructors.** Choose the best instructors, call them by their preferred names and titles, e-mail them, and visit them during office hours. Arrive early for class and get to know them better.
6. **Know expectations.** Read the syllabus for each course and clarify the expectations and requirements, such as tests, papers, extra credit, and attendance.
7. **Join a study team.** You will learn more by studying with others than by reading alone. Make up tests, give summaries, and teach others.
8. **Organize your study space.** Create a quiet space, with a place for school documents, books, catalogs, a dictionary, a computer, notes, pens, and a calendar. Eliminate distractions by closing the door, and focus on the task at hand.
9. **Map out your day, week, and semester.** Write down all assignments, upcoming tests, meetings, daily goals, and priorities on your calendar. Review your calendar and goals each day. Do not socialize until your top priorities are completed.
10. **Get help early.** Know and use all available campus resources. Go to the learning center, counseling center, and health center; get a tutor; and talk with your advisor and instructors about concerns. Get help at the first sign of trouble.
11. **Give school your best effort.** Commit yourself to being extra disciplined the first 3 weeks—buy your textbooks early; take them to class; get to class early; keep up on your reading; start your projects, papers, and speeches early; and make school a top priority.
12. **Use note cards.** Jot down formulas and key words. Carry them with you and review them during waiting time and right before class.
13. **Review often.** Review and fill in notes immediately after class and again within 24 hours. Active reading, note taking, and reviewing are the steps that improve recall.
14. **Study everywhere.** Review your note cards before class, while you wait for class to begin, while waiting in line, before bed, and so on. Studying for short periods of time is more effective than cramming late at night.
15. **Summarize out loud.** Summarize chapters and class notes out loud to your study team. This is an excellent way to learn.

(continued)

The Best Strategies for Success in School *(concluded)*

16. **Organize material.** You cannot remember information if it isn't organized. Logical notes help you understand and remember. Use a mind map for outlining key facts and supporting material.
17. **Dig out information.** Focus on main ideas, key words, and overall understanding. Make questions out of chapter headings, review chapter questions, and always read summaries.
18. **Look for associations.** Improve memory by connecting patterns and by linking concepts and relationships. Define, describe, compare, classify, and contrast concepts.
19. **Ask questions.** What is the obvious? What needs to be determined? How can you illustrate the concept? What information is the same and what is different? How does the lecture relate to the textbook?
20. **Pretest yourself.** This will serve as practice and reduces anxiety. This is most effective in your study team.
21. **Study when you are most alert.** Know your energy level and learning preference. Maximize reviewing during daytime hours.
22. **Turn in all assignments on time.** Give yourself an extra few days to review papers and practice speeches.
23. **Make learning physical.** Read difficult textbooks out loud and standing up. Draw pictures, write on a chalkboard, and use visuals. Tape lectures and go on field trips. Integrate learning styles.
24. **Review first drafts with your instructor.** Ask for suggestions and follow them to the letter.
25. **Pay attention to neatness.** Focus on details and turn in all assignments on time. Use your study team to read and exchange term papers. Proofread several times.
26. **Practice!** Nothing beats effort. Practice speeches until you are comfortable and confident, and visualize yourself being successful.
27. **Recite and explain.** Pretend that you are the instructor and recite main concepts. What questions would you put on a test? Give a summary to others in your study group. Make up sample test questions in your group.
28. **Take responsibility.** Don't make excuses about missing class or assignments or about earning failing grades. Be honest and take responsibility for your choices and mistakes and learn from them.
29. **Ask for feedback.** When you receive a grade, be reflective and ask questions: "What have I learned from this?" "How did I prepare for this?" "How can I improve this grade?" "Did I put in enough effort?" Based on what you learn, what new goals will you set for yourself?
30. **Negotiate for a better grade before grades are sent in.** Find out how you are doing at midterm and ask what you can do to raise your grade. Offer to do extra projects or retake tests.
31. **Always do extra credit.** Raise your grade by doing more than is required or *expected*. Immerse yourself in the subject, and find meaning and understanding.

(continued)

The Best Strategies for Success in School *(concluded)*

32. **Take responsibility for your education.** You can do well in a class even if your instructor is boring or insensitive. Ask yourself what you can do to make the class more effective (study team, tutoring, active participation). Be flexible and adapt to your instructor's teaching style.
33. **Develop positive qualities.** Think about the personal qualities that you need most to overcome obstacles, and work on developing them each day.
34. **Stay healthy.** You cannot do well in school or in life if you are ill. Invest time in exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep, and avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.
35. **Dispute negative thinking.** Replace it with positive, realistic, helpful self-talk, and focus on your successes. Don't be a perfectionist. Reward yourself when you make small steps toward achieving goals.
36. **Organize your life.** Hang up your keys in the same place, file important material, and establish routines that make your life less stressful.
37. **Break down projects.** Overcome procrastination by breaking overwhelming projects into manageable chunks. Choose a topic, do a rough draft, write a summary, preview a chapter, do a mind map, and organize the tools you need (notes, books, outline).
38. **Make school your top priority.** Working too many hours can cut into study time. Learn to balance school, your social life, and work so that you're effective.
39. **Meet with your advisor to review goals and progress.** Ask questions about requirements, and don't drop and add classes without checking on the consequences. Develop a good relationship with your advisor and your instructors.
40. **Be persistent.** Whenever you get discouraged, just keep following positive habits and strategies and you will succeed. Success comes in small, consistent steps. Be patient and keep plugging away.
41. **Spend less than you make.** Don't go into debt for new clothes, a car, CDs, gifts, travel, or other things you can do without. Education is the best investment you can make in future happiness and job success. Learn to save.
42. **Use critical thinking, and think about the consequences of your decisions.** Don't be impulsive about money, sex, smoking, or drugs. Don't start a family until you are emotionally and financially secure. Practice impulse control by imagining how you would feel after making certain choices. Be creative by exploring many options and being flexible.
43. **Don't get addicted.** Addictions are a tragic waste of time. Ask yourself if you've ever known anyone whose life was better for being addicted. Do you know anyone whose life has been destroyed by alcohol and other drugs? This one decision will affect your life forever.
44. **Know who you are and what you want.** Visit the career center and talk with a career counselor about your interests, values, goals, strengths, personality, learning style, and career possibilities. Respect your style and set up conditions that create results.

(continued)

The Best Strategies for Success in School *(concluded)*

45. **Use creative problem solving.** Think about what went right and what went wrong this semester. What could you have done that would have helped you be more successful? What are new goals you want to set for next semester? What are some creative ways to overcome obstacles? How can you solve problems instead of letting them persist?
46. **Contribute.** Look for opportunities to contribute your time and talents. What could you do outside of class that would complement your education and serve others? Check out internships, volunteer, and service learning opportunities.
47. **Take advantage of your texts' resources.** Many textbooks have accompanying websites, DVDs, and study materials designed to help you succeed in class.
48. **Respect yourself and others.** Be supportive, tolerant, and respectful. Look for ways to learn about other cultures and different views and ways to expand your friendships. Surround yourself with people who are positive and successful, who value learning, and who support and respect you and your goals.
49. **Focus on gratitude.** Look at the abundance in your life—your health, family, friends, and opportunities. You have so much going for you to help you succeed.
50. **Just do it.** Newton's first law of motion says that things in motion tend to stay in motion, so get started and keep working on your goals! *Create positive habits* that support your goals and practice, practice, practice.

Progress Assessment

Course: _____

Instructor: _____

Office: _____ Office hours: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

1. How am I doing in this class?

2. What grades have you recorded for me thus far?

3. Are there any adjustments that I should make?

4. Am I missing any assignments?

5. Do you have any suggestions as to how I can improve my performance or excel in your class?

Complete a similar form for each class. You'll want to have contact information about your professor, office hours, location of office, etc. Every week or so reflect on how you're doing in every class and develop a relationship with your professors so that you are known as a serious student who wants to excel.

Be a Lifelong Learner

1

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this chapter, you will learn to

- 1-1** List the characteristics of a peak performer
- 1-2** Identify self-management techniques for academic, job, and personal achievement
- 1-3** Create a personal mission statement
- 1-4** Identify skills and competencies for school and job success
- 1-5** Identify your learning style
- 1-6** Identify your personality type
- 1-7** Explain how to integrate learning styles and personality types
- 1-8** Apply the Adult Learning Cycle and integrate the VARK System
- 1-9** Describe how to overcome obstacles with positive habits and better focus

SELF-MANAGEMENT

It's the first week of classes and I'm already overwhelmed. How will I manage all this? I'm so nervous, I've started to chain smoke. Do I even belong here?

Are you feeling like this? Are you afraid you will never achieve your goals, or do you even know what your goals are or if you belong at this college? Instead of focusing on negative feelings, channel your energies into positive results and envision yourself being successful. Engage

in activities and connect with other students and faculty. In this chapter, you will learn about “self-management” and many tools—such as self-assessment, critical thinking, visualization, and reflection—you can use to become a success in all facets of life. Relax; you do belong.

JOURNAL ENTRY What are you hoping to gain from your college experience? How does earning a college degree help you both personally and professionally? Consider answering the question “Why am I here?” Is your answer part of a bigger life plan? In **Worksheet 1.1** take a stab at answering those questions. Think about the obstacles you may have faced to get to this point and what you did to overcome them. In this chapter, you'll discover that successful, lifelong learning begins with learning about yourself.



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Focus on your **STRENGTHS**,
not *weaknesses*.

Learning is a lifelong journey. People who are successful—peak performers—are on this journey. We are constantly faced with many types of changes—economic, technological, societal, and so on. These changes require us to continually learn new skills in school, on the job, and throughout life. You will meet these challenges through your study and learning strategies, in your methods of performing work-related tasks, and even in the way you view your personal life and lifestyle.

Lately, you may have been asking yourself, “Who am I?” “Why am I in school?” “What course of study should I take?” “What kind of job do I want?” or “What should I do with my life?” These are all important questions. Some you may have already answered—and some of those answers may change by tomorrow, next week, or next year. And that’s OK. This is all part of a continual process—of learning about yourself and what you want out of life. *Whatever your goals are in life, a college degree will help you to succeed both personally and professionally.*

As you journey on the road to becoming a peak performer, this book will show you methods that will help you master self-management, learn critical skills, set goals, and achieve success. One of the first steps is self-assessment. Self-assessment requires seeing yourself objectively. This helps you determine where you are now and where you want to go. Then, by assessing how you learn—including your learning and personality styles—you will discover how to maximize your learning potential.

The many exercises, journal entries, and portfolio worksheets throughout this text support one of its major themes—that success in school and success in your career are definitely connected! The skills, competencies, and behaviors you learn and practice today will guide your marketability and flexibility throughout your career, and will promote success in your personal life.

What Is a “Peak Performer”?

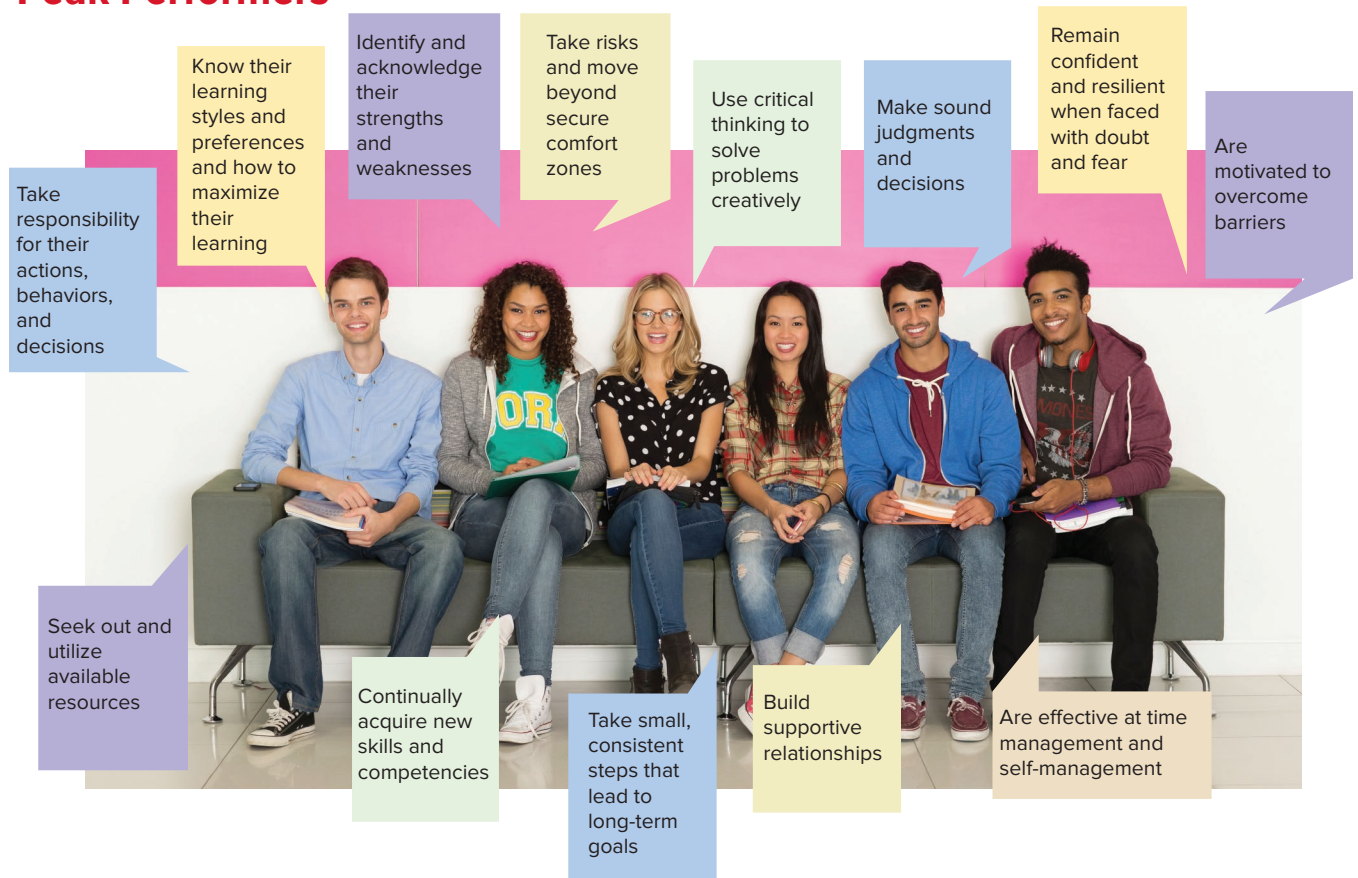
Peak performers come from all lifestyles, ages, cultures, and genders. Some are famous, such as many of the people profiled in this book. However, anyone can become a peak performer by setting goals and developing appropriate attitudes and behaviors to achieve desired outcomes. They know how to create positive habits. Peak performers excel by focusing on results. They know how to change their negative thoughts into positive, realistic affirmations. They focus on their long-term goals and know how to break down goals into daily action steps. They realize that taking small, consistent steps can produce big changes over the long haul. They are persistent and realize the value of completing their degree and obtaining a college education. They are not perfect or successful overnight. They learn to face obstacles and the fear of making mistakes and then work through them. They use the whole of their intelligence and abilities, are awake to the wonder of life, and are open to opportunities. They engage and connect at college and at work.

Every day, thousands of individuals quietly overcome incredible setbacks, climb over huge obstacles, and reach within themselves to find inner strength. They are

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.”

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
Founder of Tuskegee Institute

Peak Performers



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successful because they know they possess the personal power to produce results and find passion in what they contribute to life. They are masters, not victims, of life's situations. They control the quality of their lives by creating positive habits. In short, they are their own best friend.

Self-Management: The Key to Reaching Your Peak

What is a primary strength of every peak performer? A positive attitude! Peak performers have a positive attitude toward their studies, their work, and virtually everything they do. This fundamental inclination to view life as a series of opportunities is a key to their success. They face obstacles and realize that they can create positive habits to overcome them. A positive attitude creates resiliency and persistency—two key qualities for college and job success. Does this describe how you approach each day? Check your attitude by completing **Personal Evaluation Notebook 1.1**.

Anyone can develop the attitude of a peak performer, and it is not even difficult. It simply involves restructuring thought patterns and developing a routine that supports your goals. Instead of dwelling on problems, create options, alternatives and behaviors to keep you on track. Redirecting your thought patterns

Personal Evaluation Notebook

1.1

Am I a Positive Person?

Having a positive attitude is key to effective self-management. Most people believe they are generally positive but often are not truly aware of their negative self-talk or behavior. Answer the following questions to determine your overall outlook. After you have answered the questions, ask a friend, co-worker, or family member to answer the questions about you. Were your answers the same?

	Mostly True	Sometimes True	Rarely True
I tend to look for the good in everyone.	_____	_____	_____
I look for the positive in each situation.	_____	_____	_____
I do not take offense easily.	_____	_____	_____
I welcome constructive criticism and use it to improve.	_____	_____	_____
I am not easily irritated.	_____	_____	_____
I am not easily discouraged.	_____	_____	_____
I do not take everything personally.	_____	_____	_____
I take responsibility and face problems, even when it is not comfortable.	_____	_____	_____
I don't dwell on personal mistakes.	_____	_____	_____
I don't look for perfection in myself.	_____	_____	_____
I don't look for perfection in others.	_____	_____	_____
I do not depend on others to make me happy.	_____	_____	_____
I can forgive and move on.	_____	_____	_____
I do not become overly involved or disturbed by others' problems.	_____	_____	_____
I do not make snap judgments about people.	_____	_____	_____
I praise others for their accomplishments.	_____	_____	_____
I don't start conversations with something negative.	_____	_____	_____
I view mistakes as learning experiences.	_____	_____	_____
I know if Plan A doesn't work, Plan B will.	_____	_____	_____
I look forward to—not worry about—what tomorrow will bring.	_____	_____	_____

Add up the check marks in each column. If your "Mostly True" column scores are the highest, you are already a very positive person. If you have several check marks in the "Rarely True" column, you may want to reflect on how you can become a more positive person.

and actions in this way will give you more drive and make every task seem more meaningful and less daunting.

A positive attitude is one of the many components of **self-management**. Are you responsible for your own success? Do you believe you can control your own destiny? Think of self-management as a toolkit filled with many techniques and skills you can use to keep you focused, overcome obstacles, and help you succeed.

Along with a positive attitude (which we will discuss further in Chapter 3), some very important techniques in this toolkit are self-assessment, critical thinking, visualization, and reflection.

Self-Assessment

One of the first steps in becoming a peak performer is **self-assessment**. Out of self-assessment comes recognition of the need to learn new tasks and subjects, relate well with others, set goals, manage time and stress, and create a balanced, productive life. Self-assessment requires facing the truth and seeing yourself objectively. It isn't easy to admit you procrastinate or lack certain skills. Even when talking about your strengths, you may feel embarrassed. However, honest self-assessment is the foundation for making positive changes.

Self-assessment can help you

- Understand how you learn best
- Work with your strengths and natural preferences
- Balance and integrate your preferred learning style with other styles
- Use critical thinking and reasoning to make sound decisions
- Determine your interests and what you value
- Change ineffective patterns of thinking and behaving
- Create a positive and motivated state of mind
- Work more effectively with diverse groups of people
- Handle stress and conflict
- Earn better grades
- Determine and capitalize on your strengths
- Recognize irrational and negative thoughts and behavior
- Create positive habits that support your goals
- Most important, focus on self-management and develop strategies that maximize your energies and resources

The world is full of people who believe that, if only the other person would change, everything would be fine. This book is not for them. Change is possible if you take responsibility for your thoughts and behaviors and are willing to practice new ways of thinking and behaving.

Self-assessment is very important for job success. Keep a portfolio of your awards, performance reviews, and training program certificates, as well as the projects you have completed. Assess your expectations in terms of the results achieved and set goals for improvement. At the end of each chapter, you will find a Career Development Portfolio worksheet, which will help you relate your current activities to future job success. This portfolio will furnish you with a lifelong assessment tool for learning where you are and where you want to go and a place for documenting your results. This portfolio of skills and competencies will become your guide for remaining marketable and flexible throughout your career. Chapter 14 further explores how to develop an effective portfolio and prepare for your future career.

“Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.”

CARL JUNG
Psychologist

Creativity and Critical Thinking Skills

Throughout this book, you will be asked to apply creativity and critical thinking skills to college courses and life situations. **Critical thinking** is a logical, rational, systematic thought process that is necessary in understanding, analyzing, and evaluating information in order to solve a problem or situation. Creativity is seeing with fresh eyes and using new approaches to solve problems. It's being flexible and imaginative. Self-management involves using your creativity and critical thinking skills to make the best decisions and solve problems.

Using critical thinking helps you

- Suspend judgment until you have gathered facts and reflected on them
- Look for evidence that supports or contradicts your initial assumptions, opinions, and beliefs
- Adjust your opinions as new information and facts are known
- Ask questions, look for proof, and examine the problem closely
- Reject incorrect or irrelevant information
- Consider the source of the information
- Recognize and dispute irrational thinking
- Look at likely consequences to your actions
- Develop creativity in problem solving

Because critical thinking determines the quality of the decisions you make, it is an important theme throughout this book. Chapter 11 is devoted to honing your critical thinking skills and practicing creative problem solving. You use your critical thinking and creativity skills every day—from analyzing and determining your learning styles to communicating effectively with family members, classmates, and co-workers.

Make sure to complete the exercises and activities throughout this book, including the **Personal Evaluation Notebook** exercises and the end-of-chapter **Worksheets. Think Creatively** case studies throughout the text highlight that we are constantly making decisions that often have many repercussions—both positive and not-so-positive. Work through these to enhance your creative and critical thinking skills.

Visualization and Affirmations

Visualization and affirmations are powerful self-management tools that help you focus on positive action and outcomes. **Visualization** is the use of imagery to see goals clearly and envision engaging successfully in new, positive behavior. For example, “I see myself engaged in college, doing well, and graduating. I can see myself walking across the stage and my parents applauding. I feel such a sense of accomplishment. I did It!” **Affirmations** are positive self-talk or internal thoughts that counter self-defeating patterns of thought with more positive, hopeful, and realistic thoughts and feelings. For example, “I am friendly, kind, respectful and fun to be around. I have many friends because I’m a good friend.”

Using visualization and affirmations can help you relax, boost your confidence, change your habits, and perform better on exams, in speeches, or in sports. You can use them to rehearse for an upcoming event and practice coping with obstacles.

Through self-management, you demonstrate that you are not a victim or passive spectator; you are responsible for your self-talk, images, thoughts, and behaviors. When you observe and dispute negative thoughts and replace them with

positive and realistic thoughts, images, and behaviors, you are practicing critical thinking and creativity. You are taking charge of your life, focusing on what you can change, and working toward your goals.

You can practice visualization anytime and anywhere. For example, between classes, find a quiet place and close your eyes. It helps to use relaxation techniques, such as taking several deep breaths and seeing yourself calm, centered, and focused on your goals. This is especially effective when your mind starts to chatter and you feel overwhelmed, discouraged, or stressed. See yourself achieving your goals. Say to yourself, “I feel calm and centered. I am taking action to meet my goals. I will use all available resources to be successful.”

Reflection

Another important self-management tool is **reflection**. To reflect is to think about something in a purposeful way, with the intention of creating new meaning. It means being aware and attentive to your thoughts and feelings so that you gain insight into how you are now, who you’ve been in the past, and who you’d like to be in the future. Sometimes the process causes us to reconsider our previous beliefs and behavior and explore new alternatives and ideas. Reflection can activate the prefrontal circuits in the brain and help strengthen your mind and make your brain more flexible and resilient. Research shows that when you focus attention on the mind, circuits in your brain can be changed and you can improve your health and relationships.

Don’t confuse reflection with daydreaming. Reflection is conscious, focused, and purposeful—not simply letting your mind wander. When you reflect, you acknowledge your thoughts and feelings and then either let them go or direct your thoughts in more positive ways. Reflection helps you develop empathy, kindness, and compassion as you develop the ability to understand yourself and others. As you practice reflection, the connections among your neurons fire and grow and you create a more integrated and balanced brain. You feel flexible and freer. Reflection helps you to see the mind more clearly so that you can consciously change it. For example, let’s say you are feeling angry with a friend. With reflection you are able to see that you are not defined by your anger, nor do you have to act upon it. With reflection you can accept your feelings and allow them to be transformed so they don’t lead to depression. With practice you can learn to be more positive, balanced, and integrated.

A convenient way to reflect is to meditate or spend a few minutes each day sitting quietly and simply recording your thoughts, such as in a journal. In this text is an opportunity to practice reflection and critical thinking, including a **Journal Entry** exercise at the beginning of each chapter and a follow-up **Worksheet** at the end of each chapter.

Throughout the text, we’ll explore additional self-management techniques that focus on certain aspects of your schoolwork, employment, and personal life. **Peak Progress 1.1** explores the ABC Method of Self-Management, a unique process to help you work through difficult situations and achieve positive results. It uses skills such as critical thinking, visualization, and reflection to find positive outcomes.

Tools to help you reach your Peak

This product is full of strategies and tools to help you reach your peak performance. The **ABC Method of Self-Management** will help you challenge and dispute negative and irrational thinking, it will help you reflect upon your beliefs and determine

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.”

LOU HOLTZ
College football coach

Peak Progress

1.1

The ABC Method of Self-Management

Earlier in this chapter, you answered some questions to determine if you approach everyday life with a positive attitude. Researchers believe that positive, optimistic thinking improves your skills for coping with challenges, which may also benefit your overall health and minimize the effects of stress.

What does “negative thinking” mean? If you are negative, you may tend to

- Filter out and eliminate all the good things that happen and focus on one bad thing
- Blame yourself (or someone else) automatically when something bad happens
- Anticipate the very worst that could happen
- See things as only good or bad—there’s no middle ground
- Criticize yourself—either aloud or internally—in a way you would never do to someone else
- Waste time complaining, criticizing, reliving, and making up excuses—rather than creating solutions and moving on

The good news is that anyone can become a positive thinker. First, you need to become aware of patterns of defeating thoughts that are keeping you from achieving your goals. Then you can challenge and dispute these negative and irrational thoughts.

Clear thinking will lead to positive emotions. Let’s say you have to give a speech in a class and speaking in public has caused you anxiety in the past. Your chattering mind might say, “I am terrified. I just hate getting up in front of people. I just can’t do this.” These negative beliefs and irrational thoughts can cause severe anxiety and are not based on clear thinking. Try this affirmation: “Public speaking is a skill that can be learned with practice and effort. I will not crumble from criticism and, even if I don’t do well, I can learn with practice and from constructive feedback. I will explore all the resources available to help me and I’ll do well in this class.” Then visualize yourself standing straight, tall, and confident in front of the class. You are confident, calm, attentive to the audience, and making your key points. The audience is engaged and are responding with warmth and acceptance. You feel accomplished and connected.

Self-management can be as easy as ABC. These simple steps help you manage your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors so that you can create the results you want.

A = Actual event: State the actual situation that triggered your emotions. Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings.

B = Beliefs: Describe your thoughts and beliefs about the situation that created these emotions and behavior. Breathe deeply so that you create space for reflection and become calm and focused.

C = Challenge: Dispute the negative thoughts and replace them with accurate and positive statements. Creatively choose the most positive and appropriate response.

Let’s use another example. When you read the quote on page 1 of this chapter, you might have felt the same way—overwhelmed. You are in a new situation, with many new expectations. Let’s apply the ABC Method to focus your energies on developing a positive outcome. For example, you might say,

A = Actual event: “It’s the first day of class and I have a mountain of reading and lecture notes to go over. I feel overwhelmed.”

B = Beliefs: “What if I fail? What if I can’t keep it all straight—learning styles, personalities, temperaments? These other people are probably a lot smarter than me. Maybe I should drop out. Wow. I need to slow down and stop my chattering mind. So first I’m going to breathe deeply until I’m calm and focused.”

C = Challenge: “Going to college is a big change, but I have handled new and stressful situations before. I know how to overcome feeling overwhelmed by breaking big jobs into small tasks. I know I’m talented and smart in many ways. Going to college is a good investment in my future, and I want to graduate. I’ve handled transitions in the past, and I can handle these changes, too. I’m going to focus and read in small chunks of time throughout the day. I know that there are lots of resources available to help. I can do this!”

When you challenge negative thoughts and replace them with positive thinking, you feel energized, and your thoughts spiral upward: “I’m excited about discovering my learning and personality styles and how I can use them to my advantage. So many resources are available to me—my instructor, my classmates, The Advising and Learning Center, the book’s resources. I will get to know at least one person in each of my classes, and I will take a few minutes to explore at least one resource at school that can provide support. I see myself confident and energized and achieving my goals. I belong here!”

In the end-of-chapter **Worksheets** throughout this text, you will find opportunities to practice the ABC Method of Self-Management.

if they are helpful and supportive or limiting. When you become discouraged, go through the steps and replace negative thoughts and feelings with optimistic and hopeful thoughts. This is where creativity and critical thinking come in.

A feature called **Think Creatively and Critically** will help you practice using both creativity and critical thinking. This feature will also weave in brain research that shows you that the brain continues to grow and change. Brain research has shown that the brain takes the shape the mind rests upon.¹ If you continually rest your mind on self-criticism, doubt, worry, and anxiety, your neurons will fire together and you will have low self-esteem, become discouraged, and be quick to anger. However, when you practice mindfulness, see the good in yourself and life, let go of negative thoughts, and focus on your goals, your brain will grow in self-confidence, calm strength, and resiliency.

The Habit Cycle (or Peak Habits) will show you how to consciously plan and change your behaviors so that better behaviors (habits) become automatic; we'll discuss this more in the next chapter.

Other features in this book will help you learn new skills, become more focused, and get the most out of staying in college. This may sound a bit overwhelming now, but we'll take it one step at a time.

Be Persistent and Resilient to Succeed in College and Beyond

At the beginning of the book, I wrote a letter to you to share my experiences of doubt and confusion. There will be times in college and in a new job when you might feel that you don't belong. This is a normal and common feeling and shouldn't result in you quitting college or a job. As we will stress throughout the book, resiliency and persistence are important qualities for college and job success. You have to bounce back from setbacks and you must be willing to make positive changes by building better habits. All the exercises, case studies, stories, and examples are designed to engage you in college; connect you with new friends, faculty, staff, and co-workers; and, in short, keep you in college. These same strategies and habits will allow you to successfully transfer into the world of work. There is no point in learning how to become a successful student if you drop out. The key to creating a sense of belonging is to engage and connect. All of these features are designed to help you feel as if you belong in college and help you overcome obstacles.

Discover Your Purpose: A Personal Mission Statement

At the beginning of the chapter, you were asked to write about why you're in school and how it relates to your life plan. In the Getting Started section, you also explored many reasons you are attending college, such as to learn new skills, get a well-paying job, and make new friends. (If you haven't read the Getting Started section, now is the perfect time.) Thinking about the answers to these and related questions gets you started on writing your mission statement.

A **mission statement** is a written statement focusing on desired values, philosophies, and principles. It looks at the big picture of your life, from which your goals and priorities will flow. When you have a sense of purpose and direction, you will