

Ninth Edition

Becoming a  
*Master*  
Student

Tools, techniques, hints, ideas, illustrations,  
examples, methods, procedures, processes, skills,  
resources, and suggestions for success.

Dave Ellis



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Becoming a  
*Master*  
Student

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Tools, techniques, hints, ideas, illustrations,  
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resources, and suggestions for success.

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**Houghton Mifflin Company**

**Boston**

**New York**

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College Survival  
A Program of Houghton Mifflin Company  
2075 Foxfield Drive, Suite 100  
St. Charles, IL 60174

Portions of this book are excerpted from Dave Ellis's other books, including: *Human Being: A Manual for Happiness, Health, Love, and Wealth*; *Creating Your Future: Five Steps to the Life of Your Dreams*; and *Life Coaching: A New Career for Helping Professionals*. Reprinted by permission of Breakthrough Enterprises.

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*Printed in the U.S.A.*

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-72001

Student text ISBN: 0-395-98149-2

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 - VH - 03 02 01 00 99



As part of Houghton Mifflin's ongoing commitment to the environment, this text has been printed on recycled paper.

## **F**or the most part, students have created this book.

The First Edition of *Becoming a Master Student* came from notes that I collected while teaching a course to students. These students ended up teaching me more than I ever imagined there was to learn about student success while I was supposed to be teaching them. Since that first edition, millions of students have used this book, and their continuing input has dramatically changed it. To all of those students of different ages and from a variety of cultures and ethnic groups, I send my heartfelt thanks.

In previous editions of this book, I listed many of the educators who have contributed significantly to the strategies and insights offered to students. Unfortunately, this list has gotten so long that I cannot list, by name, the hundreds of significant contributors. Some educators have offered an idea or two as part of an article. Others have provided the inspiration and much of the content for entire articles. Still others have offered suggestions that have totally rearranged the structure and outline of this text. Thank you all.

During the last twenty years, I have worked day to day with dozens of people who have contributed dramatically to the creation of this text. They have lent ideas, logistical support, project management, consultation, and design. To all of those people, I want you to know that this book would never have been produced without you. There are a few people out of the dozens I have worked with who have made such a difference in this book that to leave them unnamed would border on unethical. Therefore, I deeply thank and acknowledge the work of Doug Toft, Stan Lankowitz, Larry David, Jeff Swaim, Mary Maisey-Ireland, Bill Rentz, Robbie Murchison, Bill Harlan, Judith Maisey, James Anderson, Wayne Zako, Richard Kiefer, JoAnne Bangs, Leonard Running, and Shirley Wileman-Conrad.

In this book, the design and artwork are critical components of the message. For that work I appreciate the mastery of Bill Fleming, along with the other people who have contributed so much to the artistry of this book, including Susan Turnbull, Amy Davis, Neil Zetah, Roger Slott, Lee Christiansen, and Mike Speiser.

Along with thanking the Advisory Board members listed on the title page of this book, I also want to sincerely thank the consultants of College Survival, including Karen Marie Erickson, Holly Garrard, Njia Lawrence-Porter, Marilee Marchelya, LaVerne Newson, and Jerome Roberts.

Many people at Houghton Mifflin Company have provided thousands of hours of excellent and dedicated work in the creation of this book. Specifically I thank June Smith, Alison Zetterquist, Barbara Heinssen, Terry Wilton, Nancy Doherty-Schmitt, Sarah Ambrose, Margaret Kearney, Tony Saizon, Florence Cadran, Douglas Texter, Shani Fisher, Jodi O'Rourke, Monica Hincken, Ellen Whalen, Shawn Kendrick, and Tim Krause.

For their contribution to my life and to my becoming a master student, I thank my wife, Trisha Waldron, and my best friend, Stan Lankowitz. I also treasure what I have learned from my children, Sara, Elizabeth, Snow, and Berry, and I honor the constant encouragement of my parents, Maryellen and Ken.

I know that no book and no set of ideas come from a single person, and my intention is to continue to give to others what all of the people I have mentioned here have given to me.

 COLLEGE  
SURVIVAL  
*Committed to Student Success*

*I want your feedback. When you see ways to improve this book, please write to me. More than ever, I recognize the value of your ideas. I want to know what works and what doesn't work for you.*

*Dave Ellis*

P.O. Box 8396 • RAPID CITY, SD 57709-8396

*Dave Ellis*

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*Change and growth take place when a person  
has risked himself and dares to become involved  
with experimenting with his own life.*

HERBERT OTTO

*The human ability to learn and remember is virtually limitless.*

SHEILA OSTRANDER & LYNN SCHROEDER

# Introduction

## AS YOU BEGIN...

**consider one way to ensure that  
this book is worthless  
and seven ways you can use it  
to succeed in school. Also do a  
textbook reconnaissance and  
discover options for getting  
the most out of this book.**

**You can declare what you want  
from your education and  
commit to making this book  
a partner in your success.**

# This book is worthless...

## EXERCISE



### Textbook reconnaissance

Start becoming a master student this moment. Do a 15-minute "textbook reconnaissance" of this book. Here's how:

First, read the 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.

A textbook reconnaissance shows you where a course is going. It gives you the big picture. That's useful because brains work best when going from the general to the specific. Getting the big picture before you start makes details easier to recall and understand later on.

Your textbook reconnaissance will work even better if, as you scan, you look for ideas you can use. When you find one, write the page number and a short description of it in the space below. The idea behind this technique is simple: It's easier to learn when you're excited, and it's easier to get excited about a course if you know it's going to be useful, interesting, or fun.

When you have found five interesting ideas, stop writing and continue your survey. Remember, look at every page, and do it quickly. And here's another useful tip for the master student: Do it now.

Page number	Description
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____

The first edition of this book began with the sentence: *This book is worthless.* Many students thought this was a trick to get their attention. It wasn't. Others thought it was reverse psychology. It wasn't that, either. Still others thought it meant that the book was worthless if they didn't read it. It's more than that.

The book is worthless even if you read it, if reading is all you do. What was true of that first edition is true of this one. Until you take action and use the ideas in it, *Becoming a Master Student* really is worthless.

You probably won't take action and use the ideas until you are convinced that you have something to gain. The main purpose of this introduction is to persuade you to commit to spending the energy to use this book actively. Before you stiffen up and resist, the purpose of this sales pitch is not to separate you from your money. You already bought the book. Now you can get something for your money by committing yourself to take action—in other words, commit yourself to become a master student. Here's what's in it for you.

### **Pitch #1: You can save money now and make more later**

Start with money. Your college education is one of the most expensive things you will ever buy. Typically, it costs students \$30 to \$70 an hour to sit in class. Unfortunately, many students think their classes aren't even worth 50 cents an hour.

As a master student, you control the value you get out of your education, and that value can be considerable. The joy of learning aside, college graduates make an average of over \$1 million more during their lifetimes than their nondegreed peers. It pays to be a master student.

### **Pitch #2: You can rediscover the natural learner in you**

Joy is important too. As you become a master student, you will learn ways to learn in the most effective way possible by discovering the joyful, natural learner within you.

Children are great natural students. They quickly learn complex skills, such as language, and they have fun doing it. For them, learning is a high-energy process involving experimentation, discovery, and sometimes, broken dishes. Then comes school. For some students, drill and drudgery replace discovery and dish breaking. Learning can become a drag. You can use this book to reverse that process and rediscover what you knew as a child—that laughter and learning go hand in hand.

Sometimes learning does take effort, especially in college. As you become a master student, you will learn many ways to get the most out of that effort.

### **Pitch #3: You can choose from hundreds of techniques**

*Becoming a Master Student* is packed with hundreds of practical, nuts-and-bolts techniques. And you can begin using them immediately. For example, during your textbook reconnaissance on page 1, you practiced three powerful learning techniques in one 15-minute exercise. (If you didn't do the textbook reconnaissance, it's not too late to get your money's worth. Do it now.) If you doze in lectures, drift during tests, or dawdle on term papers, you can use the ideas in this book to become a more effective student.

Not all these ideas will work for you. That's why there are so many of them in *Becoming a Master Student*. You can experiment with the techniques. As you discover what works, you will develop a unique style of learning that you can use for the rest of your life.

### **Pitch #4: You get the best suggestions from thousands of students**

The concepts and techniques in this book are not here because learning theorists, educators, and psychologists say they work. They are here because tens of thousands of students from all kinds of backgrounds tried them and say they work. These are people who dreaded giving speeches, couldn't read

their own notes, and couldn't remember where their ileocaecal valve was. Then they figured out how to solve these problems, which was the hard part. Now you can use their ideas.

### **Pitch #5: You can learn about you**

The process of self-discovery is an important theme in *Becoming a Master Student*.

Throughout the book you can use Discovery Statements and Intention Statements for everything from organizing your desk to choosing long-term goals. Studying for an organic chemistry quiz is a lot easier with a clean desk and a clear idea of the course's importance to you.

### **Pitch #6: You can use a proven product**

The first eight editions of this book were successful for hundreds of thousands of students. In schools where it was widely used, the dropout rate decreased as much as 25 percent and in some cases, 50 percent. Student feedback has been positive. In particular, students with successful histories have praised the techniques in this book.

### **Pitch #7: You can learn the secret of student success**

If this sales pitch still hasn't persuaded you to actively use this book, maybe it's time to reveal the secret of student success. (Provide your own drum roll here.) The secret is, there are no secrets. Perhaps the ultimate formula is to give up formulas and keep inventing.

The strategies and tactics that successful students use are well known. You have hundreds of them at your fingertips right now, in this book. Use them. Modify them. Invent new ones. You're the authority on what works for you.

However, what makes any technique work is commitment—and action. Without them, the pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are just 2.1 pounds of expensive mulch. Add your participation to the mulch, and these pages are priceless.

## JOURNAL ENTRY



Info

<http://www.hmco.com/college/success/>

Search

### Discovery Statement

Success is a choice. Your choice. To *get* what you want, it helps to *know* what you want. That is the purpose of this Journal Entry.

Select a time and place when you know you will not be disturbed for at least 20 minutes. (The library is a good place to do this.) Relax for two or three minutes, clearing your mind. Then complete the following sentences . . . and then keep writing. Write down everything you want to get out of school. Write down everything you want your education to enable you to do after you finish school.

When you run out of things to write, stick with it just a bit longer. Be willing to experience a little discomfort. Keep writing. What you discover might be well worth the extra effort. You can begin choosing success right now by choosing a date, time, and place to complete this Journal Entry. Write your choice here and block out the time on your calendar.

Date:

Time:

Place:

What I want from my education is . . .

---

---

---

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

---

---

---

I also want . . .

---

---

## JOURNAL ENTRY



### Discovery Statement

On a separate piece of paper, write a description of a time in your life when you learned or did something well. This situation need not be related to school. Describe the details of the situation, including the place, time, and people involved. Describe how you felt about it, how it looked to you, how it sounded. Describe the physical sensations you associate with the event. Describe your emotions also.

If you have Internet access, connect to Houghton Mifflin's student success site on the World Wide Web at [www.hmco.com/college/success/](http://www.hmco.com/college/success/).

Consider posting your responses to this Journal Entry there. And while you're there, read responses from other students who took this important step in promoting their success.

You can also save a copy of your responses to this Journal Entry and include them in your portfolio. See "Creating & using portfolios" in Chapter One.



The portfolio exercises in this book were developed with suggestions from advisory board member Eve Walden, Valencia Community College.

# Get the most out of this book

**1. Rip 'em out.** The pages of *Becoming a Master Student* are perforated because some of the information here is too important to leave in the book and some, your instructor may want to see. For example, Journal Entry #1 asks you to write some important things you want to get out of your education. To keep yourself focused, you could rip that page out and post it on your bathroom mirror or some other place where you'll see it several times a day.

You can re-insert the page by just sticking it into the spine of the book; it will hold. A piece of tape will fix it in place.

**2. Skip around.** You can use this book in several different ways. Read it straight through. Or pick it up, turn to any page, and find an idea you can use. Look for ideas you can use right now. For example, if you're about to choose a major or considering changing schools, skip directly to the articles on these topics in Chapter Twelve.

**3. If it works, use it. If it doesn't, lose it.** If there are sections of the book that don't apply to you at all, skip them—unless, of course, they are assigned. Then, see if you can gain value from these sections anyway. When you are committed to getting value from this book, even an idea that seems irrelevant or ineffective at first can turn out to be a powerful tool.

**4. Rewrite this book.** Here's an alternative strategy to the one above. If an idea doesn't work for you, rewrite it. Change the exercises to fit your needs. Create a new technique by combining several others. Create a technique out of thin air!

**5. Put yourself into the book.** As you read about techniques in this book, invent your own examples, starring yourself in the title role. For example, as you were reading the explanation of Exercise #1: "Textbook reconnaissance," you might have pictured

yourself using this technique on your world history textbook.

**6. Yuk it up.** Going to school is a big investment. The stakes are high. It's OK to be serious about that, but you don't have to go to school on the deferred-fun program. A master student celebrates learning, and one of the best ways to do that is to have a laugh now and then.

**7. Own this book.** Write your name and address on the first page of this book now, and don't stop there. Create a record of what you want to get out of school and how you intend to get it by completing the Journal Entries and exercises. Every time your pen touches a page, you move closer to mastery of learning.

**8. Do the exercises.** Action makes this book work. To get the most out of an exercise, read the instructions carefully before you begin. To get the most out of this book, do most of the exercises. More important, avoid feeling guilty if you skip some. And by the way, it's never too late to go back and do those.



These exercises invite you to write, touch, feel, move, see, search, ponder, speak, listen, recall, choose, commit, and create. You might even sing and dance. Learning often works best when it involves action.

**9. Get used to a new look and tone.** This book looks different from traditional textbooks. *Becoming a Master Student* presents major ideas in magazine-style articles. You will discover lots of lists, blurbs, one-liners, pictures, charts, graphs, illustrations, and even a joke or two.

The icons and key visuals in this book carry special meanings. For example, Journal Entries are introduced by a drawing of a twisted pencil, a sign of infinity, symbolizing the idea that journaling is a process that

never ends. The picture of the running shoe that accompanies the exercises in this book indicates the action that makes for effective learning.

One more note: As a strategy for avoiding sexist language, this book alternates the use of feminine and masculine pronouns.

**10. Practice critical thinking.** Throughout this book are activities labeled “Practicing Critical Thinking.” Look for them next to the icon of the “thinker” inside a light bulb, who’s there to encourage contemplation and constant problem solving. Also note that other elements of this text promote critical thinking, including exercises and Journal Entries.



**11. Learn about learning styles.** Check out the Learning Styles Applications at the end of each chapter. These are included to increase your awareness of your preferred learning styles and to help you explore new styles. Each exercise will guide you through experiencing four specific learning stages as applied to the content of the chapter. The four-color icon for these applications represents those stages. For a detailed explanation of these stages, see “Learning styles—Discovering how you learn” in Chapter One.



**12. Enter cyberspace.** You’ll see an Internet logo next to articles, exercises, and Journal Entries throughout this book. This indicates opportunities for you to explore the Internet as a tool for promoting your success in school. Note that for a variety of technical reasons, you might not be able to connect to a suggested Internet site the first time you try. In that case, try to connect again later. Or go to Houghton Mifflin’s student success site on the World Wide Web at [www.hmco.com/college/success/](http://www.hmco.com/college/success/) for a list of alternate sites that are updated monthly.



**13. Create a portfolio.** Your responses to the exercises and Journal Entries throughout this book can furnish raw material for a portfolio. A special portfolio logo highlights these opportunities. Your portfolio can provide a visible record of your successes in higher education. Portfolios also offer a creative way to supplement your résumé when you apply for jobs. For more details, see “Creating & using portfolios” in Chapter One.



## EXERCISE



### Commitment

This book is worthless without your action. One powerful way to begin taking action is to make a commitment. Conversely, without commitment, sustained action is unlikely, and the result is a worthless book. Therefore, in the interest of saving your valuable time and energy, this exercise gives you a chance to declare your level of involvement up front. From the choices below, choose the sentence that best reflects your commitment to using this book. Write the number in the space provided at the end of the list.

1. “Well, I’m reading this book right now, aren’t I?”
2. “I will skim the book and read the interesting parts.”
3. “I will read the book and think about how some of the techniques might apply to me.”
4. “I will read the book, think about it, and do the exercises that look interesting.”
5. “I will read the book, do exercises, and complete some of the Journal Entries.”
6. “I will read the book, do exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
7. “I will read the book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
8. “I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and use some of the techniques.”
9. “I will study this book, do most of the exercises and Journal Entries, and experiment vigorously with most of the suggestions in order to discover what works best for me.”
10. “I promise to get value from this book, beginning with Exercise #1: ‘Textbook reconnaissance,’ even if I have to rewrite the sections I don’t like and even if I have to invent new techniques of my own.”

Enter your commitment level and today’s date here:

Commitment level \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you selected commitment level 1 or 2, you might consider passing this book on to a friend. If your commitment level is a 9 or 10, you are on your way to terrific success in school. If you are somewhere in between, experiment with the techniques; if you find they work, consider returning to this exercise and raising your level of commitment.

*No one can make you feel inferior without  
your consent.*

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

## CHAPTER

# 1

# First Step

*You either change things or you don't.  
Excuses rob you of power and induce apathy.*

AGNES WHISTLING ELK

*In oneself lies the whole world, and if you know how  
to look and learn, then the door is there and the key  
is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you  
either that key or the door to open, except yourself.*

J. KRISHNAMURTI

**IN THIS CHAPTER...** take a **First Step** to lasting change:

**Tell the truth** about your current abilities. Then set goals and align your actions by using the **Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System**. Also discover and expand your **learning styles**, start building a **portfolio** to document your success, and use a **power process** that can enhance the value of any idea in this book.

# First Step: Truth is a key to mastery

## JOURNAL ENTRY



### Discovery Statement

Perhaps you know people who've tried to repair their cars without knowing what parts they needed. Or maybe you've tried to buy clothes for someone without knowing that person's size and preferred styles. In such cases you can be more effective when you know what the specific problem is or what the people involved truly want.

On a separate sheet of paper, describe a time when you wanted to solve a problem but lacked specific information about the nature of that problem or had no clear idea of the outcome you desired.

Now describe a time when, from your diagnosis and desired results, you were able to accurately describe a problem and efficiently solve it.

Succeeding in this course—and in school—uses the same process. It begins with identifying the skills you already have, along with the new skills you want to acquire. Success also involves telling the truth about any problem you face right now and creating a plan to solve it.

Take time now to preview the Discovery Wheel exercise on page 14. Then list several specific benefits you can gain by reading and applying the ideas in this chapter.

I discovered that I . . .

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The First Step technique is simple: Tell the truth about who you are and what you want. End of discussion. Now proceed to Chapter Two.

Well, it's not quite that simple.

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

Unfortunately, a First Step is easier to explain than it is to use, and it's not that easy to explain. "Telling the truth" sounds like pie-in-the-sky moralizing, but there is nothing pie-in-the-sky or moralizing about a First Step. It is a practical, down-to-earth way to change behavior. No technique in this book has been field-tested more often or more successfully—or under tougher circumstances. Just ask almost any recovering alcoholic.

A fundamental principle of Alcoholics Anonymous is that alcoholics must tell the truth about their drinking before they can begin to change. This is an essential ingredient in AA's "First Step" and in its entire Twelve Step program. Today people recovering from addictions to food, drugs, sex, work, and whatever else human beings can abuse employ the same principle. They use First Steps to change their behavior for one reason: First Steps work.

Compared to conquering addictions, training to be a master student is a snap. But let's be truthful. It's not easy to tell the truth about ourselves. We might have to admit that we're afraid of algebra or that we never complete term papers on time. It's tough to admit weaknesses. For some people, it's even harder to admit strengths. Maybe they don't want to brag. Maybe they're attached to poor self-images. The reasons don't matter. The point is, using the First Step system in *Becoming a Master Student* means telling the truth about your positive qualities also.

Many of us approach a frank evaluation of ourselves about as enthusiastically as we'd greet an auditor from the IRS. There is another way

to think about evaluations. If we could see them as opportunities to solve problems and take charge of our lives, we might welcome them as gifts. If we routinely experienced more happiness after evaluations, we might even greet them with hopeful excitement. It may seem natural to judge our own shortcomings and feel bad about them. Some people believe that such feelings are necessary to correct their errors. Others think that a healthy dose of shame is the only thing that can prevent the moral decay of our society.

There is an alternative. We can discover a way to gain skill without feeling rotten about the past. We can change the way things are without having to be upset about the way things have been. We can learn to see shame or blame as excess baggage and just set it aside. We can acknowledge and even regret our mistakes and shortcomings while accepting ourselves completely. And by doing so, we can become even more happy, healthy, loving, and wealthy in the long run. Believe it or not, we can begin working with our list of weaknesses by celebrating them.

Consider the most loving, successful, enlightened, “together” people you know. If they were totally transparent with us, we’d soon hear about their mistakes and regrets. The more successful people are, the more likely they are to be open to looking at their flaws.

It might help to remember that weaknesses are often strengths that people carry to an extreme. The student who takes time to carefully revise his writing can make significant improvements in a paper. If he keeps revising past the due date, he could sacrifice his grade. This is just one example of how any success strategy carried too far can backfire.

Making the First Step technique work also means telling the truth about what you want. Sounds easy, you say? Many people would rather eat nails. If you don’t believe it, find three other students and ask them what they want to get out of their education. Be prepared for hemming and hawing, vague generalities, and maybe even a helping of pie-in-the-sky à la mode.

On the other hand, if one of them tells you she wants a degree in journalism with double minors in earth sciences and Portuguese so she can work as a reporter covering the environment in Brazil, chances are, you’ve found a master student. The details of her vision are a clue to her mastery.

Goals are more powerful when they are specific. So are First Steps, whether they are verbal or written. For example, if you want to improve your note-taking skills, you might write, “I am an awful note taker.” It would be more effective to write, “I can’t read 80 percent of the notes I took in Introduction to Psychology last week and I have no idea

## JOURNAL ENTRY



### Intention Statement

Review Exercise #1: “Textbook reconnaissance.” Consider the articles in this book that you thought might be valuable. Choose the one from which you think you can get the most immediate, practical benefit and scan that article until you come to a specific technique you can use. Write an Intention Statement in this space concerning how you will use that technique within the next week. Include when you intend to use it. For example, if you listed the article called “When reading is tough,” you could use any of the techniques suggested for difficult reading assignments. If you have a tough computer science course, you might choose to form a study group to discuss reading assignments. In that case, you might write, “I intend to contact four other students after class tomorrow about forming a group to study computer science.”

I intend to use the study technique . . .

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I will use it at the following times:

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### If you skipped the Introduction...

Some people think introductions are useless clutter. The Introduction is an important part of this book. It suggests ways to get your money’s worth. Please read the Introduction.

Here’s what awaits you:

- Exercise #1: “Textbook reconnaissance”
- This book is worthless
- Get the most out of this book
- Exercise #2: “Commitment”

Please read it now.

what was important in that class.” Be just as specific about what you want. You might declare, “I want to take legible notes that help me predict what questions will be on the final exam.”

By completing the exercises in this chapter, you can take a giant First Step. You can tell the truth about what kind of student you are and what kind of student you want to become. If that prospect puts a knot in your stomach, that’s good. Notice that knot. It is your friend. It is reminding you that telling the truth about yourself takes courage, which is an important characteristic of a master student.

Your courage will be rewarded. The Discovery Wheel exercise and the rest of the exercises in this book are your First Steps to tapping resources you never imagined you had. You might even want to take a First Step in mapping out the rest of your life with a detailed career plan.

They’re all First Steps—no kidding. It’s just that simple. The truth has power.

## EXERCISE



### Taking the First Step

The purpose of this exercise is to give you a chance to acknowledge and discover the positive as well as the negative aspects of yourself. For many students, this is the most difficult exercise in this book. To make the exercise worthwhile, do it with courage.

Some people suggest that looking at negative aspects is counter to positive thinking. Well, perhaps. Positive thinking is a great technique. So is seeing the truth, especially when we see the whole picture—even though a realistic picture of ourselves may include some extremely negative points.

If you admit that you can’t read, and that’s the truth, then you have taken a strong positive First Step to becoming a successful reader. On the other hand, if you say that you are a terrible math student, and that’s not the truth, then you are programming yourself to accept unnecessary failure.

The point is, tell the truth. This exercise is similar to each Discovery Statement appearing throughout this text. The

difference is that in this case, for reasons of confidentiality, you don’t write your discoveries in the book.

Be brave. If you approach this exercise with courage, you are likely to write down some things you don’t want others to read. You may even write down some truths about yourself that could get you into trouble. Do this exercise on separate pieces of paper; then hide or destroy them. Protect your privacy.

To make this exercise work, follow these three suggestions:

1. *Be specific.* It is not effective to write, “I could improve my communication skills.” Of course you can. Instead, write down precisely what you can do to improve your communication skills. For example: “I can spend more time really listening while the other person is talking, instead of thinking about what I’m going to say next.”
2. *Look beyond the classroom.* What goes on outside school often has the greatest impact on your ability to be an effective student.
3. *Be courageous.* This exercise is a waste of time if done only half-heartedly. Be willing to risk. Sometimes you may open a door that reveals a part of yourself that you didn’t want to admit was there. The power of this technique is that once you know what the “it” is, you can do something.

#### Part 1

Time yourself, and for 10 minutes, write as fast as you can and complete the following sentences with anything that comes to mind. Complete each sentence at least 10 times. If you get stuck, don’t stop; just write something—even if it’s crazy.

It is ineffective when I . . .  
It doesn’t work when I . . .  
I could change . . .

#### Part 2

When you have completed the first part of the exercise, review what you have written and cross off things that don’t make any sense. The sentences that remain suggest possible goals for becoming a master student.

#### Part 3

Here’s the tough part. Time yourself, and for 10 minutes, write as fast as you can. Complete the following sentences with anything that comes to mind. As in Part 1, complete each sentence at least 10 times and just keep writing, even if it sounds silly.

I am very good at . . .  
It is effective when I . . .  
Something very positive about me is . . .

#### Part 4

Review your list and circle the things that you can fully celebrate. This is a good list to keep for those times when you question your own value and worth.

# The Discovery and Intention

One way to become a better student is to grit your teeth, grunt, and try harder. There is another way. You can use the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System to increase your effectiveness with the least possible struggle. This system is a way to focus your energy, and it's closely related to the idea of taking a First Step.

The Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System is a little like flying a plane. Airplanes are seldom exactly on course. Human and automatic pilots are always checking and correcting the heading. The resulting path looks like a zigzag. The plane is almost always flying in the wrong direction, but because of constant observation and course correction, it arrives at the right place.

The same type of system can be used by students. In fact, you have already used it if you completed the Journal Entries on previous pages. (If you haven't, consider doing one right now.) Journal Entries throughout this book are labeled either

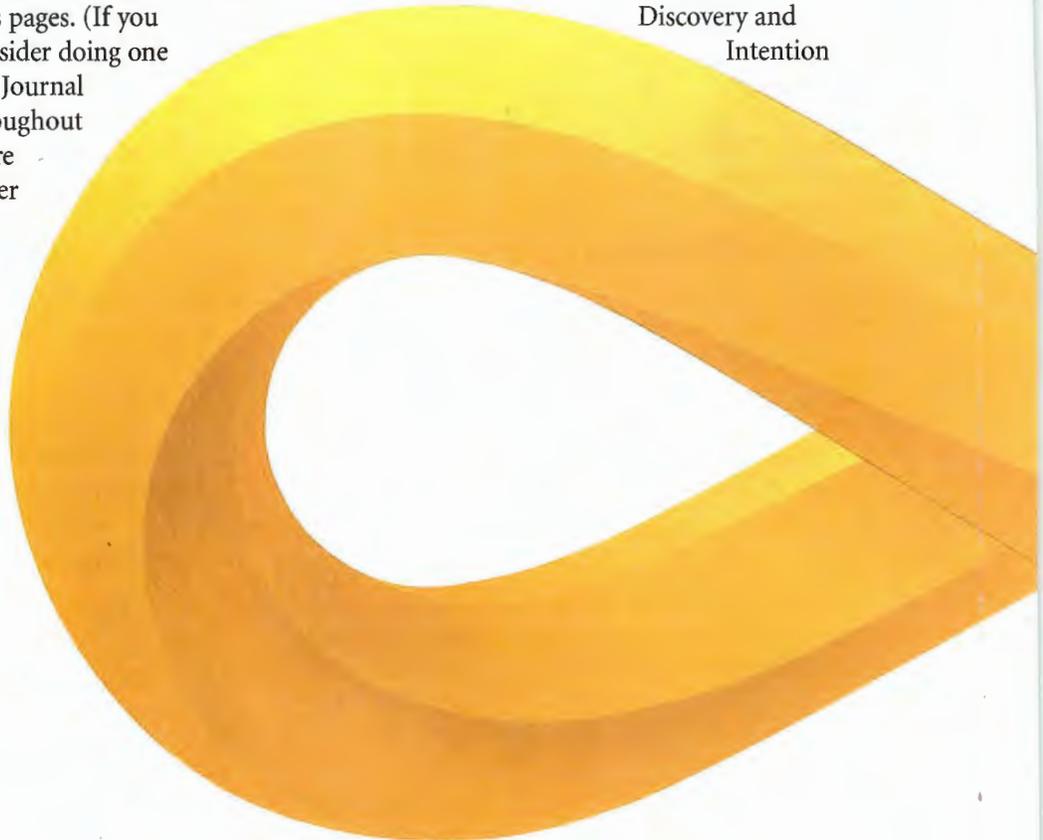
"Discovery Statement" or "Intention Statement." Each Journal Entry will contain a short set of suggestions for your writing.

Through Discovery Statements, you can learn "where you are." They are a record of what you learn about yourself as a student—both strengths and weaknesses. Discovery Statements can also be declarations of what you want, descriptions of your attitudes, statements of your feelings, transcripts of your thoughts, and chronicles of your behavior.

Intention Statements can be used to alter your course. They are statements of your commitment to do a specific task, to take a certain action. An intention arises out of your choice to direct your energy toward a particular goal.

The purpose of this system is not to get you pumped up and excited to go out there and try harder.

Discovery and  
Intention



# Journal Entry System

EXERCISE



#4

Statements keep you focused on what you want and how you intend to get it.

The Journal Entry process is a cycle. You can write Discovery Statements about where you are and where you want to go. Then you can write Intention Statements about the specific steps you will take to get there. Then you can write Discovery Statements about whether you completed those steps and what you learned in the process, followed by more Intention Statements, and so on. Sometimes the statements will be long and detailed. Usually they will be short, maybe just a line or two. Practice it, and the cycle can become automatic.

Don't panic when you fail to complete an intended task. Straying off course is normal. Simply make the necessary corrections. Miraculous progress may not come immediately. Do not be concerned. Stay with the cycle. Use Discovery

Statements to get clear about your world and what you want out of it. Then use Intention Statements to direct your actions. When you notice progress, record it.

The following statement might strike you as radical, but it is true: It often takes the same amount of energy to get what you want in school as it takes to get what you don't want. Sometimes getting what you don't want takes even more effort. An airplane burns the same amount of fuel flying away from its destination as it does flying toward it. It pays to stay on course.

You can use the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System to stay on your own course and get what you want out of school. Consider the guidelines for Discovery Statements and Intention Statements on pages 12 and 13; then develop your own style. Once you get the hang of it, you might discover you can fly.

## Deface this book

Some books should be preserved in pristine condition. This isn't one of them.

There are valid reasons for not writing in any book. For one thing, it decreases the resale value. However, the benefit of writing in your books outweighs that consideration.

*Becoming a Master Student* is about learning, and learning is an active pursuit, not a passive one. Something happens when you reach out and touch a book with your pen. When you make notes in the margin, you can hear yourself talking with the author. When you doodle and underline, you can see the author's ideas take shape. You can even argue with an author or create your own ideas.

While you're at it, create symbols for reviewing the text later, such as Q for questions or an \* for important points. You could also circle words to look up in a dictionary.

To complete this exercise, find something you agree with or disagree with on this page and write a short note in the margin about it. Or draw a diagram. Better yet, do both. Let creativity be your guide. Have fun. Begin defacing now.



Hello  
Author  
I Agree  
😊

# Seven Discovery & Intention



## Discovery Statements

### 1. Discover what you want

You can have more energy when what you're doing leads to what you want. Many students quit school simply because they are unclear about what they want. Writing it can make it clear.

### 2. Record the specifics

Observe your actions and record the facts. If you spent 90 minutes reading a spy novel instead of your anatomy text, write about it and include the details, such as when you did it, where you did it, and how it felt.

### 3. Notice your inner voices and pictures

We talk to ourselves constantly in our heads, and our minds manufacture pictures faster than television. When internal chatter gets in your way, write down what you are telling yourself. If this seems difficult at first, just start writing. The act of writing can trigger a flood of thoughts. Our mental pictures are especially powerful. Picturing yourself flunking a test is like a rehearsal to do just that. One way to deflate negative images is to describe them in detail.

### 4. Notice physical sensations

When you approach a difficult accounting problem, note your physical symptoms—a churning stomach, perhaps, or shallow breathing or yawning. Record your observations quickly, as soon as you make them.

Also notice how you feel when you function well. Use Discovery Statements to pinpoint exactly where and when you learn most effectively.



## Intention Statements

### 1. Make your intentions positive

Instead of writing "I will not fall asleep while studying accounting," write, "I intend to stay awake when studying accounting."

Also avoid the word *try*. Trying is not doing. When we hedge our bets with *try*, we can always tell ourselves, "Well, I tried to stay awake." The result is, we fool ourselves into thinking we succeeded.

### 2. Make intentions small and keepable

Give yourself opportunities to succeed. Break large goals into small, specific tasks you can accomplish quickly. If you want to get an A in biology, ask yourself, What can I do today? You might choose to study biology for an extra hour. Make that your intention.

Experience success by choosing your intentions with care. Set goals you can accomplish.

### 3. Use observable criteria for success

Experiment with an idea from trainer Robert Mager,<sup>1</sup> who suggests that you define your goals through behaviors that can be observed and measured. Rather than writing "I intend to work harder on my history assignments," write, "I intend to review my class notes, and I intend to make summary sheets of my reading." Then, when you review your progress, you can determine more precisely whether you accomplished what you intended.

### 4. Set timelines

Timelines can focus your attention, especially if used in conjunction with suggestion #2. For example, if you are assigned a term paper, break the assignment into small tasks and set a precise timeline for each one. You might write, "I intend to select a topic for my paper by 9 a.m. Wednesday." Remember that you create timelines for your own benefit, not to set yourself up to feel guilty. And you can often change the timeline.

# Statement guidelines

## 5. Use discomfort as a signal

When you are writing a Discovery Statement and you begin to feel uncomfortable, bored, or tired, that may be a signal that you are about to do valuable work. Stick with it. Tell yourself you can handle the discomfort just a little bit longer. You will be rewarded.

## 5. Be careful of intentions that depend on others

Your intention might depend on the actions of other people. If you write that you intend for your study group to complete the assignment by Monday, your success depends on other students. Make such intentions carefully; then ask for the assistance of the people they depend on.

## 6. Suspend self-judgment

When you are discovering yourself, be gentle. If you continually judge your behaviors as *bad* or *stupid* or *galactically imbecilic*, sooner or later your mind will revolt. Rather than put up with the abuse, it will quit making discoveries. Be kind.

## 6. Anticipate self-sabotage

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

## 7. Tell the truth

“The truth will set you free” is a cliché. Practice telling the truth, and you might find out why the phrase is so well-worn. The closer you get to the truth, the more powerful your Discovery Statements will be.

And remember, telling the truth requires courage and vigilance. Don't blame yourself when you notice you avoid the truth. Just tell the truth about it.

## 7. Identify your rewards

Rewards that are an integral part of a goal are powerful. For example, your reward for earning a degree might be the career you want. External rewards, such as a movie or an afternoon in the park, are valuable too. These rewards work best when you're willing to withhold them. If you intend to take a nap on Sunday afternoon whether you finish your English assignment or not, the nap is not an effective reward. Another way to reward yourself is to sit quietly after you have finished your task and savor the feeling. One reason why success breeds success is that it feels good.



The purpose of this exercise is to explore how your feelings can inhibit your ability to think objectively.

For each of us there are certain issues that trigger strong emotional reactions. For some people, these topics include abortion, gay and lesbian rights, capital punishment, and funding for welfare programs. Your list could include these topics or others.

Create your list in a two-column format on a separate sheet of paper. In one column, write a word or short phrase describing each issue. In the other column, describe the way you typically respond when each issue comes up in conversation or writing.

Column 1 Issue	Column 2 Response
-------------------	----------------------

Now list what you can do to remain more objective when one of your “hot button” issues comes up.

The *Practicing Critical Thinking* exercises included throughout this book incorporate ideas from Peter Facione, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Santa Clara University and creator of the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory. Mr. Facione provided substantial suggestions for these exercises and edited them. He can be contacted through the California Academic Press on the World Wide Web at:

Info  Search

## EXERCISE



### The Discovery Wheel

The Discovery Wheel is another opportunity to tell the truth to yourself about the kind of student you are and the kind of student you want to become.

This is not a test. There are no trick questions, and the answers will have meaning only for you.

Here are two suggestions to make this exercise more effective. First, think of it as the beginning of an opportunity to change. There is another Discovery Wheel at the end of this book. You will have a chance to measure your progress, so be honest about where you are now. Second, lighten up. A little laughter can make self-evaluations a lot more effective.

Here's how the Discovery Wheel works. By the end of this exercise, you will have filled in a circle similar to the one on this page. The Discovery Wheel circle is a picture of how you see yourself as a student. The closer the shading comes to the edge of the circle, the higher the evaluation.

In the above example, the student has rated her reading skills low and her note-taking skills high.

It is dangerous, however, to think of these evaluations in terms of "higher" and "lower" if those designations reflect a negative judgment. The Discovery Wheel is not a permanent picture of who you are. It is a picture of how you view your abilities as a student today.

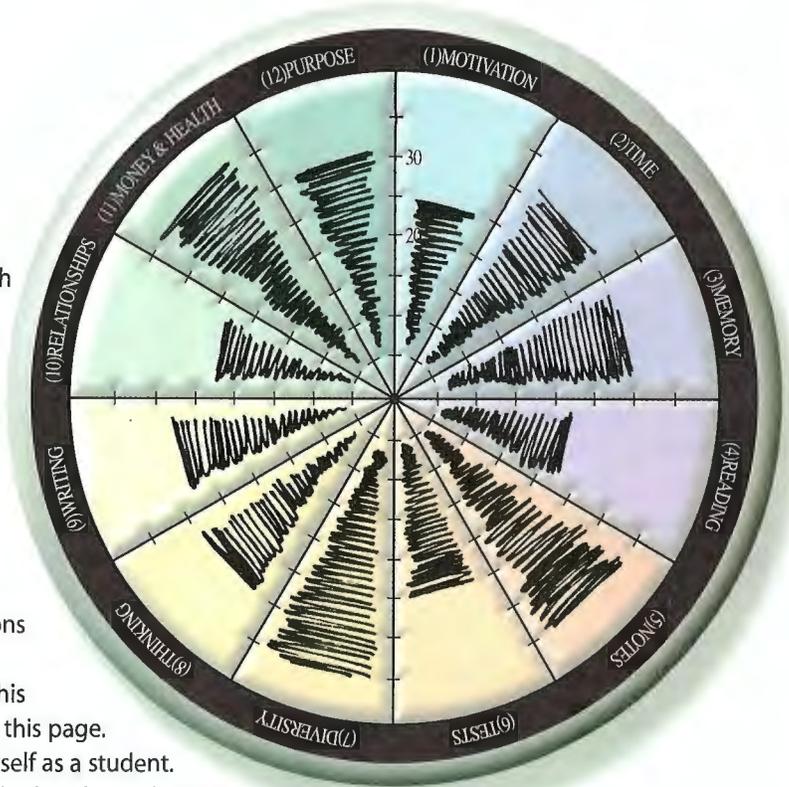
To begin this exercise, read the following statements and award yourself points for each one, using the point system below. Then add up your point total for each section and shade the Discovery Wheel on page 17 to the appropriate level.

Consider making a copy of your responses to this exercise and including them in your portfolio. For more ideas, see "Creating & using portfolios" later in this chapter. For an online version of this exercise, visit Houghton Mifflin's student success site on the World Wide Web at:

Info

<http://www.hmco.com/college/success/>

Search



#### 5 points

This statement is always or almost always true of me.

#### 4 points

This statement is often true of me.

#### 3 points

This statement is true of me about half the time.

#### 2 points

This statement is seldom true of me.

#### 1 point

This statement is never or almost never true of me.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I start courses highly motivated, and I stay that way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I know what I want to get from my education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I study even when distracted by activities of lower priority.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am satisfied with how I progress toward achieving goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I use knowledge of learning styles to support my success in school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am excited about the courses I take.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have a clear idea of the benefits I expect to get from my education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I periodically refine my long-term goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I regularly define short-term goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I write a plan for each day and each week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I assign priorities to what I choose to do each day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I plan review time so I don't have to cram before tests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I plan regular recreation time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I adjust my study time to meet the demands of individual courses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have adequate time each day to accomplish what I plan.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (2) **Time**

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (1) **Motivation**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I am confident in my ability to remember.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I remember people's names.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ At the end of a lecture, I can summarize what was presented.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I apply techniques that enhance my memory skills.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I can recall information when I'm under pressure.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I remember important information clearly and easily.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I can jog my memory when I have difficulty recalling.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I can relate new information to what I've already learned.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (3) **Memory**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I preview and review reading assignments.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ When reading, I underline or highlight important passages.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ When I read, I ask questions about the material.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ When I read textbooks, I am alert and awake.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I relate what I read to my life.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I select a reading strategy to fit the type of material I'm reading.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I take effective notes when I read.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ When I don't understand what I'm reading, I note my questions and find answers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (4) **Reading**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ When I am in class, I focus my attention.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I take notes in class.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of various methods for taking notes and choose those that work best for me.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ My notes are valuable for review.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I review class notes within 24 hours.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I distinguish important material and notice key phrases in a lecture.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I copy material the instructor writes on the board or overhead projector.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I can put important concepts into my own words.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (5) **Notes**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel confident and calm during an exam.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I manage my time during exams, and I am able to complete them.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to predict test questions.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I can examine essay questions in light of what I know and come to new and original conclusions during a test.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I adapt my test-taking strategy to the kind of test I'm taking.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand what essay questions ask and can answer them completely and accurately.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I start reviewing for tests at the beginning of the term and review regularly.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ My sense of personal worth is independent of my test scores.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (6) **Tests**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of my cultural biases and open to understanding people with different backgrounds.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I build rewarding relationships with people from other cultures and races.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I can point out examples of discrimination and effectively respond to them.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I use school-based services to support my success.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I use community-based resources to support my success.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I take specific steps to make a successful transition into higher education.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I am in regular contact with instructors and students who share my academic interests.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I effectively integrate schooling with my family and work lives.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (7) **Diversity**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I have flashes of insight, and solutions to problems appear to me at unusual times.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I use brainstorming to generate solutions to a variety of problems.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ When I get stuck on a creative project, I use specific methods to get unstuck.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I see problems and decisions as opportunities for learning and personal growth.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to consider different points of view and alternative solutions.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I can state the assumptions that underlie a series of assertions.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I can detect common errors in logic.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I approach courses in mathematics and science with confidence.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (8) **Thinking**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I approach writing with confidence.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I can effectively plan and research a large writing assignment.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I create first drafts without stopping to edit or criticize my writing.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I revise my writing for clarity, accuracy, and coherence.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ My writing affirms women and is free of sexist expressions.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ When writing, I accurately credit ideas and facts from other people.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I know ways to prepare and deliver effective speeches.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I am confident when I speak before others.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (9) **Writing**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I budget my money and am in control of my personal finances.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I am confident that I will have enough money to complete the education that I want.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I repay my debts on time.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ My sense of personal worth is independent of my financial condition.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I exercise regularly and eat to maintain a healthful weight.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ My emotional health supports my ability to learn.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I notice changes in my physical condition and respond effectively.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I am in control of any alcohol or drugs I put into my body.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (11) **Money & Health**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I am candid with others about who I am, what I feel, and what I want.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Other people tell me that I am a good listener.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I communicate my upset and anger without blaming others.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I make and keep promises that stretch me to meet my potential.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to learn from various instructors with different teaching styles.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I have the ability to make friends and create valuable relationships in a new setting.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I am open to being with people I don't especially like in order to learn from them.

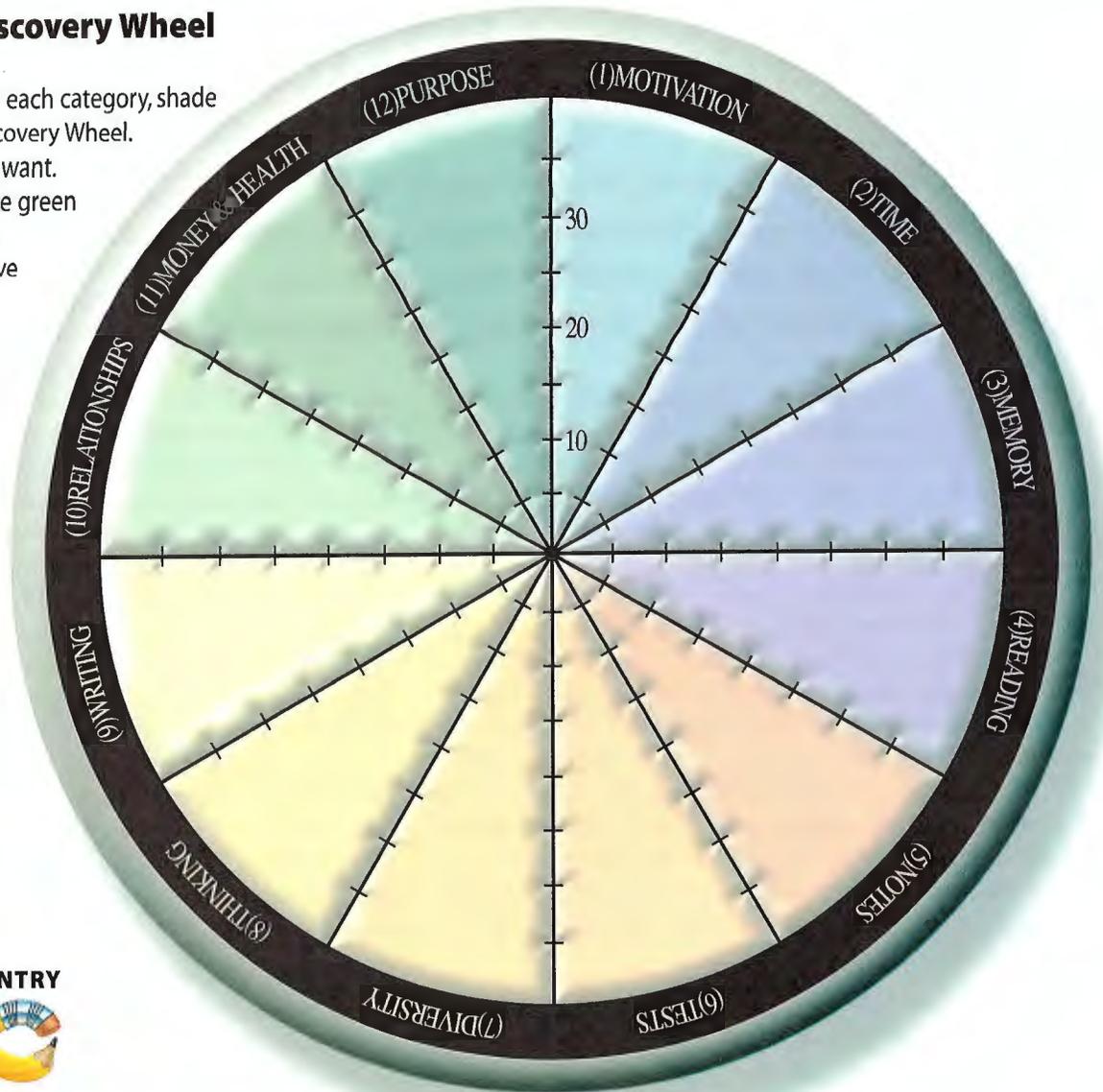
\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (10) **Relationships**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I see learning as a lifelong process.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I relate school to what I plan to do for the rest of my life.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I learn by contributing to others.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I revise my plans as I learn, change, and grow.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I am clear about my purpose in life.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I know that I am responsible for my own education.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I take responsibility for the quality of my life.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to accept challenges even when I'm not sure how to meet them.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total score (12) **Purpose**

## Filling in your Discovery Wheel

Using the total score from each category, shade in each section of the Discovery Wheel. Use different colors if you want. For example, you could use green to denote areas you want to work on. When you have completed the wheel, complete the following Journal Entries.



### JOURNAL ENTRY



### Discovery Statement

Now that you have completed your Discovery Wheel, spend a few minutes with it. Get a sense of its weight, shape, and balance. How would you feel if you ran your hands around it? How would it sound if it rolled down a hill? How would it look? Would it roll at all? Is it balanced? Make your observations without judging the wheel as good or bad. Simply be with the picture you have created. After you have spent a few minutes studying your Discovery Wheel, on a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences. Don't worry if you can't think of something to write. Just write whatever comes to mind. Remember, this is not a test.

This wheel is an accurate picture of my ability as a student because . . .

My self-evaluation surprises me because . . .

The two areas in which I am strongest are related because . . .

The areas in which I want to improve are . . .

I want to concentrate on improving these areas because . . .

### JOURNAL ENTRY



### Intention Statement

Select one of your discoveries from the previous Journal Entry and plan how you intend to benefit from it.

To gain some practical benefit from this discovery, I will . . .

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# Creating & using portfolios

**In medieval times, artisans who wished to join a guild presented samples of their work. Furniture makers showed cabinets and chairs to their potential mentors. Painters presented samples of their sketches and portraits. Centuries later, people still value a purposeful collection of work samples. It is called a *portfolio*.**

**M**artin Kimeldorf, author of *Portfolio Power*,<sup>2</sup> notes that the word *portfolio* derives from two Latin terms: *port*, which means “to move,” and *folio*, which means “papers” or “artifacts.” True to these ancient meanings, portfolios are movable collections of papers and artifacts.

Portfolios differ from résumés. A résumé lists facts, including your interests, skills, work history, and accomplishments. Although a portfolio might include these facts, it can also include tangible objects to verify the facts—anything from transcripts of your grades to a video you produced. Résumés offer facts; portfolios provide artifacts.

Photographers, contractors, and designers regularly show portfolios filled with samples of their work. Today, employers and educators increasingly see the portfolio as a tool that’s useful for everyone. Some schools require students to create them, and some employers expect to see a portfolio before they’ll hire a job applicant.

## **Enjoy the benefits— academic, professional, and personal**

A well-done portfolio benefits its intended audience. To an instructor, your portfolio gives a rich, detailed picture of what you did to create value from a class. To a potential employer, your portfolio gives observable evidence of your skills and achievements. In both cases, a portfolio also documents something more intangible—your levels of energy, passion, and creativity.

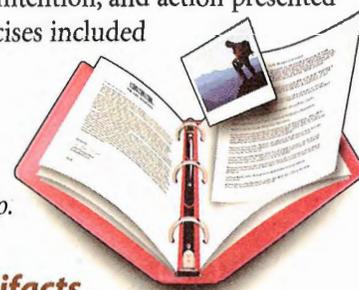
Portfolios benefit you in specific ways. When you create a portfolio to document what you learned during a class, you review the content of the entire course. When you’re creating a portfolio related to your career, you think about the skills you want to develop and ways to showcase those skills. And when you’re applying for work, creating a portfolio prepares you for job interviews. Your portfolio can stand out from stacks of letters and résumés and distinguish you from other applicants.

By creating and using portfolios, you also position yourself for the workplace of the future. People such as William Bridges, author of *Jobshift*,<sup>3</sup> have predicted a “jobless economy.” In such an economy, work will be done by teams

assembled for specific projects instead of by employees in permanent positions. Workers will move from team to team, company to company, and career to career far more often than they do today. If these changes

take place on a wide scale, then listing your job titles on a résumé will be less useful than documenting your skills in a vivid, detailed way. Creating and using portfolios is a wonderful way to provide that documentation.

In a more general sense, creating a portfolio helps you reflect on your life as a whole. When selecting artifacts to include in your portfolio, you celebrate your accomplishments. You discover key themes in your experience. You clarify what’s important to you and create goals for the future. Portfolios promote the cycle of discovery, intention, and action presented in the Journal Entries and exercises included throughout this text. To create a portfolio, experiment with a four-step process: *Collect and catalog artifacts. Plan your portfolio. Assemble your portfolio. Present your portfolio.*



## **Collect and catalog artifacts**

An artifact is any object that’s important to you and that reveals something about yourself. Examples include photographs, awards, recommendation letters, job descriptions for positions you’ve held, newspaper articles about projects you’ve done, lists of grants or scholarships you’ve received, programs from performances you’ve given, transcripts of your grades, or models you’ve constructed.

Taken together, your artifacts form a large and visible “database” that gives a picture of you—what you value, what you’ve done, and what you have. You can add to this database during every year of your life. From this constantly evolving collection of artifacts, you can create many portfolios for different purposes and different audiences.

Start collecting now. Write down the kinds of artifacts you’d like to save. Think about what will be most useful to you in creating portfolios for your courses and your job search. In some cases, collecting artifacts requires follow-up. You might call former instructors or employers to request letters of recommendation. Or you might track down newspaper articles about a service learning project you did. Your responses to the Journal Entries and exercises in this book can also become part of your portfolio.

To save hours when you create your next portfolio, start documenting your artifacts. On a 3x5 card, record the “five W’s” about each artifact: *who* was involved with it, *what* you did with it, *when* it was created, *where* it was created, and *why* the artifact is important to you. File these cards and update them as you collect new artifacts. Another option is to manage this information with a computer, using word-processing or database software.

### Plan your portfolio

When you’re ready to create a portfolio for a specific audience, allow some time for planning. Begin with your purpose for creating the portfolio—for example, to demonstrate your learning or to document your work experience, as you prepare for a job interview.

Also list some specifics about your audience. Write a description of anyone who will see your portfolio. List what each person already knows about you and predict what else these people will want to know. Answer their questions in your portfolio.

Being aware of your purpose and audience will serve you at every step of creating a portfolio. Screen artifacts with these two factors in mind. If a beautiful artifact fails to meet your purpose or fit your audience, then leave it out for now. Save the artifact for a future portfolio.

When you plan your portfolio, also think about how to order and arrange your artifacts. One basic option is a chronological organization. For example, start with work samples from your earliest jobs and work up to the present.

Another option is to structure your portfolio around key themes, such as your values or work skills. When preparing this type of portfolio, you can define *work* to include any time you used a job-related skill, whether or not you got paid.

### Assemble your portfolio

With a collection of artifacts and a written plan, you’re ready to assemble your portfolio. Arranging artifacts according to your design is a big part of this process. Also include elements to orient your audience members and guide them through your portfolio. Such elements can include:

- a table of contents.
- an overview or summary of the portfolio.
- titles and captions for each artifact.
- an index to your artifacts.

Although many portfolios take their final form as a collection of papers, remember that this is just one possibility. You can also create a bulletin board, a display, or a case that contains your artifacts. You could even create a video or a digital portfolio in the form of a personal web site.

You might find it useful to combine your résumé and portfolio into one document. In other cases, you can mention in your résumé that a separate portfolio is available on request.

### Present your portfolio

Your audience might ask you to present your portfolio as part of an interview or oral exam. If that’s true, then rehearse your portfolio presentation the way you would rehearse a speech. Write down questions that people might ask about your portfolio. Prepare some answers. Then do a dry run: Present your portfolio to friends and people in your career field, and request their feedback.

That feedback will give you plenty of ideas about ways to revise your portfolio. Any portfolio is a living document. Change it as you acquire new perspectives and skills.

## ARTIFACTS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

*When looking for items to include in a portfolio, start with the following checklist. Then brainstorm your own list of added possibilities.*

- Brochures describing a product or service you created, or workshops you attended
- Certificates, licenses, and awards
- Computer disks with sample publications, databases, or computer programs you’ve created
- Course descriptions and syllabi from classes you’ve taken or taught
- Formal evaluations of your work
- Job descriptions from positions you’ve held
- Letters of recommendation
- Lists of grants, scholarships, clients, customers, and organizations you’ve joined
- Newspaper and magazine articles about projects you participated in
- Objects you’ve created or received—anything from badges to jewelry
- Plans—lists of personal and professional values, goals, action plans, completed tasks, project timelines, and life lines
- Printouts of e-mail and web pages (including your personal web page)
- Programs from artistic performances or exhibitions
- Résumés or a curriculum vitae
- Sheet music or scores
- Tapes (video or audio), compact discs, or CD-ROMs
- Transcripts of grades, test scores, vocational aptitude tests, or learning styles inventories
- Visual art, including drawings, photographs, collages, and computer graphics
- Writing samples, such as class reports, workplace memos, proposals, policy and mission statements, bids, manuscripts for articles and books, and published pieces or bibliographies of published writing

Download a sample portfolio from Martin Kimeldorf on the World Wide Web at:

Info

[www.amby.com/kimeldorf/sampler/](http://www.amby.com/kimeldorf/sampler/)

Search

# POWER PROCESS # 1

*There are many ideas in this book. Don't believe any of them. Instead, think of them as tools. For example, you use a hammer for a purpose—to drive a nail.*

When you use a new hammer, you might notice its shape, its weight, and its balance. You don't try to figure out whether the hammer is "right." You use it. If it works, you use it again. If it doesn't work, you get a different hammer.

This is not the attitude most people adopt when they encounter new ideas. The first thing most people do with new ideas is measure them against old ones. If a new idea conflicts with an old one, the new one is likely to be rejected.

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

Most of us have a built-in desire to be right. Our ideas, we often think, represent ourselves. And when we identify with our ideas, they assume new importance in our lives. We put them on our mantels. We hang them on our walls. We wear them on our T-shirts and display them on our bumpers. We join associations of people who share our most beloved ideas. We make up rituals about them, compose songs about them, and write stories about them. We declare ourselves dedicated to these ideas. Sometimes, we are even willing to die for them.

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

## Ideas are tools



Imagine someone defending a hammer. Picture this person holding up a hammer and declaring, "I hold this hammer to be self-evident. Give me this hammer or give

me death. Those other hammers are evil. There are only two kinds of people in this world: people who believe in this hammer and infidels."

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

to be used. This approach to ideas is much like one advocated by psychologist and philosopher William James.<sup>4</sup> His approach to philosophy, which he called *pragmatism*, emphasized the usefulness of ideas as a criterion of truth. James liked to talk about the "cash value" of an idea—whether it leads to new actions and new results.

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

If it works, use it.  
If it doesn't, don't.

### Ask: What if that's true?

When presented with a new idea, many people take pride in being critical thinkers. They look for problems. They continue to doubt the idea until there's clear proof. They probe for weaknesses. Their main question seems to be "What's wrong with this idea?"

This approach can be useful at times, and it is just one approach. When we constantly look for what's wrong with new ideas, we may miss how they can be useful.

A different and potentially more powerful approach is to ask, "What if that idea is true?" This opens all sorts of new possibilities and variations. Rather than looking

for what's wrong, we can look for what's potentially valuable. Faced with a new idea, we can stay in the inquiry, look deeper, and go further.

### Keep looking for answers

The airplane, the light bulb, the notion of the unconscious, the invention of the transistor, and the computer chip—these and many other tools became possible when their inventors practiced the art of continually looking for additional answers.

Another way to expand your toolbox is to keep looking for answers. Much of your education will be about finding answers to questions. Every subject you study—from algebra to history to philosophy—poses a unique set of questions. Some of the most interesting questions are those that admit many answers: How can we create a just society? How can we transmit our values to the next generation? What are the purposes of higher education? How can we prevent an environmental crisis?

Other questions are more personal: What career shall I choose? Shall I get married? Where shall I live and how shall I spend my leisure time? What shall I have, do, and be during my time on earth?

Perhaps you already have answers to these questions. Answers are wonderful, especially when they relate to our most persistent and deeply felt questions. Answers can also get in

the way. Once we're convinced that we have the answer, it's easy to stop looking for more answers. We then stop learning. Our range of possible actions becomes limited.

Instead of latching on to one answer, we can look for more. Instead of being content with the first or easiest options that come to mind, we can keep searching. Even when we're convinced that we've finally handled a problem, we can brainstorm until we find five more solutions.

When we keep looking for answers, we uncover fresh possibilities for thinking, feeling, and behaving. Like children learning to walk, we experience the joy of discovery.

### A caution

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

And remember, this book is not about figuring out the "right" way. Even the "ideas are tools" idea is not "right."

It's a hammer . . . (or maybe a saw).

create at least five more solutions. Whenever possible, list solutions that seem to contradict each other.

Describe your problem and list your possible solutions on a separate sheet of paper. Next, write about any change in the way you see this problem after creating alternative solutions.

If you have Internet access, connect to Houghton Mifflin's student success site on the World Wide Web at [www.hmco.com/college/success/](http://www.hmco.com/college/success/). Consider posting your responses to this exercise there. And while you're there, read responses from other students who took this important step in promoting their own success.



*You can save a copy of your responses to this exercise and include them in your portfolio.*

### EXERCISE



### Maybe it's your breath

The way you breathe affects the way you think, and the way you think affects the way you breathe. A good supply of oxygen to the brain is essential for focused concentration. The next time you find your mind wandering, take a short break and do the following exercise. Read all the directions; then take a moment to practice this technique.

1. Sit up in your chair in a relaxed position, head straight and hands uncrossed in your lap.
2. Close your eyes and take 20 or 30 seconds to relax. Let go of any tension in your face, neck, and shoulders.
3. Inhale, breathing deeply into your abdomen. Your stomach will expand when you breathe deeply.
4. When you have filled your lungs with air, pause; purse your lips as if you were about to whistle; then exhale evenly and with force through the small hole between your lips.
5. At the end of your exhalation, pause; then push out the last bit of remaining air in three short, forceful puffs.
6. Repeat this process three to five times.
7. When finished, sit quietly for a while, observing the rise and fall of your abdomen as you breathe normally.



This exercise is an experiment in creative thinking suggested by Power Process #1: "Ideas are tools." When we see ideas as tools, one of our aims can be to create many possible solutions when we're faced with a problem. That way, we have a bigger "tool box"—more options from which we can choose.

Describe in writing a problem you face in your academic or personal life right now—anything from handling conflict with an instructor to finding a new day care provider.

Perhaps you already have a possible solution to this problem in mind. Great. Now

## Learning styles



# Discovering how you learn

**Most of us have preferred ways to perceive and process new information. These preferences are often called learning styles or preferred stages of learning. By knowing more about your preferred stage of learning, you can make learning easier and overcome the obstacles in many classroom settings.**

**Y**ou have already learned thousands of things in your life in a way that is very natural. Most of this learning took place outside the classroom where you usually learned through four natural stages of learning.

Sometimes this more natural approach to learning fails to happen in schools when students try to learn without knowing *why* they are learning (as in Stage 1), having adequate time for practice (Stage 3), and integrating the learning into their lives (Stage 4). Schools often only excel at delivering theory and facts (Stage 2).

Understanding these stages as well as your preferred learning stage can make learning both inside and outside the classroom a more enjoyable activity.

### **Two tasks—perceiving and processing**

When we learn, two things initially happen. One is perceiving—our style of noticing the world, the way we “take in” reality. Another is processing—how we internalize a new experience and make it our own. The concept of learning styles and the stages of learning takes into account different combinations of perceiving and processing.

#### **Perceiving**

- Some people may favor perceiving by “concrete experience.” Generally, they prefer to deal with situations in a very personal way. They perceive by sensing and feeling, often taking an intuitive approach to problem solving. They function well in unstructured situations where they can take the initiative.
- Other people may favor perceiving by “abstract conceptualization.” They like to think things through. They analyze, intellectualize, and build theories to understand their experiences. They take a scientific approach to problems and often excel in well-defined, structured situations.

#### **Processing**

- Some people may favor processing new information by “active experimentation.” They prefer to jump in and start doing things immediately. They look for practical ways to apply what they have learned. Generally, they do not mind taking risks and are results-oriented.
- Other people favor processing by “reflective observation”—by watching and pondering what is going on. Often they see several points of view and can generate many ideas about how something happens. They are likely to value patience and good judgment.

None of us fall purely in any one of these categories. To determine what stage of learning we prefer, we combine ways we process and perceive to come up with a profile of our learning style.

### **Learning Style Inventory: Instructions**

To discover more about the learning stages that you prefer, complete the Learning Style Inventory on the next page. You will read 12 sentences, each with four different endings. Rank the endings of each sentence according to how well you think they describe the way you go about learning.

Recall some recent situations when you learned something (at work, at school, or in your life). Then, using the space provided, write a “4” next to the words that describe best the way you learn. Then, continue ranking the other choices with a “3,” “2,” and “1,” where “1” describes least the way you learn.

This is a forced choice inventory. You must rank each ending with “4,” “3,” “2,” or “1.”

Before you begin, remove the sheet of paper following page LSI-2. Press firmly so your number is copied on the page underneath the questions.

Do this inventory quickly. Time yourself and complete the 12 sentences in about six minutes. Allow another 15 minutes to score the inventory. Remember, this is not a test. There are no wrong answers.

This information is used to help you know more about your learning preferences so that you can become a more well-rounded learner.

# Learning Style Inventory

Fill in the following blanks like this example:

**A. When I learn:**

2 I am happy

3 I am fast

4 I am logical

1 I am careful

REMEMBER: 4 = MOST LIKE YOU 3 = SECOND MOST LIKE YOU 2 = THIRD MOST LIKE YOU 1 = LEAST LIKE YOU.

**Remove the sheet of paper following this page. Press firmly while writing.**

**1. When I learn:**

\_\_\_ I like to deal  
with my feelings.

\_\_\_ I like to think  
about ideas.

\_\_\_ I like to be  
doing things.

\_\_\_ I like to  
watch and listen.

**2. I learn best when:**

\_\_\_ I listen and  
watch carefully.

\_\_\_ I rely on  
logical thinking.

\_\_\_ I trust my hunches  
and feelings.

\_\_\_ I work hard to  
get things done.

**3. When I am learning:**

\_\_\_ I tend to reason  
things out.

\_\_\_ I am responsible  
about things.

\_\_\_ I am quiet  
and reserved.

\_\_\_ I have strong feelings  
and reactions.

**4. I learn by:**

\_\_\_ feeling.

\_\_\_ doing.

\_\_\_ watching.

\_\_\_ thinking.

**5. When I learn:**

\_\_\_ I am open to  
new experiences.

\_\_\_ I look at all sides  
of issues.

\_\_\_ I like to analyze  
things, break them  
down into their parts.

\_\_\_ I like to try  
things out.

**6. When I am learning:**

\_\_\_ I am an  
observing person.

\_\_\_ I am an  
active person.

\_\_\_ I am an  
intuitive person.

\_\_\_ I am a  
logical person.

**7. I learn best from:**

\_\_\_ observation.

\_\_\_ personal  
relationships.

\_\_\_ rational theories.

\_\_\_ a chance to  
try out and practice.

**8. When I learn:**

\_\_\_ I like to see results  
from my work.

\_\_\_ I like ideas  
and theories.

\_\_\_ I take my time  
before acting.

\_\_\_ I feel personally  
involved in things.

**9. I learn best when:**

\_\_\_ I rely on  
my observations.

\_\_\_ I rely on  
my feelings.

\_\_\_ I can try things  
out for myself.

\_\_\_ I rely on  
my ideas.

**10. When I am learning:**

\_\_\_ I am a  
reserved person.

\_\_\_ I am an  
accepting person.

\_\_\_ I am a  
responsible person.

\_\_\_ I am a  
rational person.

**11. When I learn:**

\_\_\_ I get involved.

\_\_\_ I like to observe.

\_\_\_ I evaluate things.

\_\_\_ I like to be active.

**12. I learn best when:**

\_\_\_ I analyze ideas.

\_\_\_ I am receptive  
and open-minded.

\_\_\_ I am careful.

\_\_\_ I am practical.

# Interpreting Your Learning Style Graph

**NOTE:** Before reading this page, score your inventory by following the directions on page LSI-3. Then, complete the Learning Style Graph on page LSI-5. The information and the graphics are presented on this page so you can more easily compare your completed graph (page LSI-5) to the samples below once you have removed page LSI-3.

## Four stages of learning

There are many theories about learning styles. This Learning Style Inventory comes from one that has a wide acceptance and influence—the experimental theory explained by David Kolb, a professor at Case Western Reserve University. When we learn naturally and learn well, explains Kolb, we tend to go through four stages in understanding our experience:

**Stage 1:** Some of us want to know why we are learning things. We seek a purpose for information and a personal connection with the content. This is Stage 1 of the learning cycle.

**Stage 2:** Some people crave the kind of ideas and facts presented in the classroom. Often such people are not so concerned about how this material relates to their personal lives. Instead, these students are eager to learn for the sheer pleasure of learning. This occurs during Stage 2 of the learning cycle.

**Stage 3:** Some people hunger for an opportunity to experiment with the knowledge they gain in the classroom. They want to test what they learn. These learners ask: "Does this idea make sense? Is it usable?" This is Stage 3 of the learning cycle.

**Stage 4:** Some of us are more concerned about how we can use what we learn to make a difference in our lives. We do well mixing with others, participating in group activities, and creating on our feet, and we are usually vocal in a group.

## Your preferred learning stage

When you examine the Learning Style Graph on page LSI-5, you will notice that your learning style profile (the kite you drew) may be primarily located in one part of that graph. This will give you an idea of your preferred learning stage as well as how to challenge yourself by practicing learning in the other stages as well.

Using the descriptions below and the sample graphs, identify your preferred learning stage.

### Stage 1

If the majority of your learning profile is in the upper right-hand corner (Stage 1), you probably like to consider a situation from many different points of view. In this stage of the learning cycle, you determine why it is important to learn a new idea or technique.



### Stage 2

If your learning profile is predominantly in the lower right-hand corner of the Learning Style Graph, you prefer Stage 2 learning. You probably enjoy learning lots of facts and then arranging these facts in a logical and concise manner. When you are in this stage of the learning cycle, you are interested in knowing what ideas or techniques are important.



### Stage 3

If most of your learning profile is in the lower left-hand corner of the Learning Style Graph, you probably prefer Stage 3. In this stage, you get involved with new learning by practicing and testing it out. You want to know how ideas or techniques work. During this stage, you are practicing what you learned.



### Stage 4

If most of your learning profile is in the upper left-hand corner of the Learning Style Graph, you probably prefer Stage 4. You like to take what you have practiced and find other uses for it. While in this stage of the learning process you ask: "Where else in my life can I use this newly gained skill or information?" You seek ways to relate what you have learned to other areas of your life.



## Combinations

Some profiles combine portions of all four stages. The profile to the right reflects a learner who is focused primarily on gathering information—lots of information! People with this profile tend to ask for additional facts from an instructor, or they want to know where they can go to discover more about a subject.



The profile to the right indicates a learner who focuses more on understanding what he or she learns and less on gathering lots of information. People with this profile often like smaller chunks of data with plenty of time to digest it. Long lectures can be difficult for these learners.



The profile to the right indicates a learner who is fairly well-balanced. People who have this profile can be highly adaptable. They tend to learn no matter what the instructor does in the classroom. These people generally enjoy learning and do well in school.



**CAUTION:** No matter what stage you prefer, please remember that you use all four stages of learning. The goal of a master student can be to develop expertise in moving around the learning graph and balancing all four stages.

**Remove this sheet before completing  
the Learning Style Inventory.**

*This page is inserted to ensure that the other writing you do in this book doesn't show through on page LSI-3.*

**Remove this sheet before completing  
the Learning Style Inventory.**

*This page is inserted to ensure that the other writing you do in this book doesn't show through on page LSI-3.*

# Scoring Your Inventory

Now that you have taken the Learning Style Inventory, it is time to fill out the Learning Style Graph and interpret your results. To do this, please follow the next five steps.

**Step 1:** Add up all the numbers you gave to the items marked with brown F-shaped letters. Then, write that total to the right in the blank titled, **"BROWN F" TOTAL**. Also, total all the numbers for **"TEAL W"**, **"PURPLE T"**, and **"ORANGE D"**. Write those totals to the right.

**Step 2:** Add the four totals to arrive at a GRAND TOTAL.

This should equal 120. If you have something other than 120, go back and re-add the colored letters, it was probably just an addition error. Now, remove this page, and continue with Step 3 on page LSI-5.

GRAND TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

"BROWN F" TOTAL  "TEAL W" TOTAL   
 "PURPLE T" TOTAL  "ORANGE D" TOTAL 

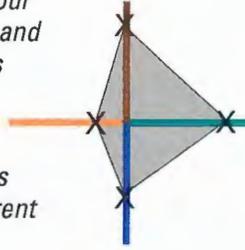
**Remove this page after you have completed Steps 1 and 2 on page LSI-3. And, then, continue with Step 3 on page LSI-5.**

*Once you have completed Step 3, you can discard this page so you can more easily compare your completed Learning Style Graph with the examples on page LSI-2.*

# Learning Style Graph

**Step 3:** Remove the piece of paper that follows this page and then transfer your totals to the lines on the Learning Style Graph below. On the brown (F) line, find the number that corresponds to your **"BROWN F"** total from page LSI-3. Then place an X on this number. Do the same for your **"TEAL W"**, **"PURPLE T"**, and **"ORANGE D"** totals.

**Step 4:** Now, pressing firmly, draw four straight lines to connect the four X's and shade in the area to form a kite. This is your learning profile. (See the illustration to the right.)



Each X that you placed on these lines indicates your preference for a different aspect of learning.

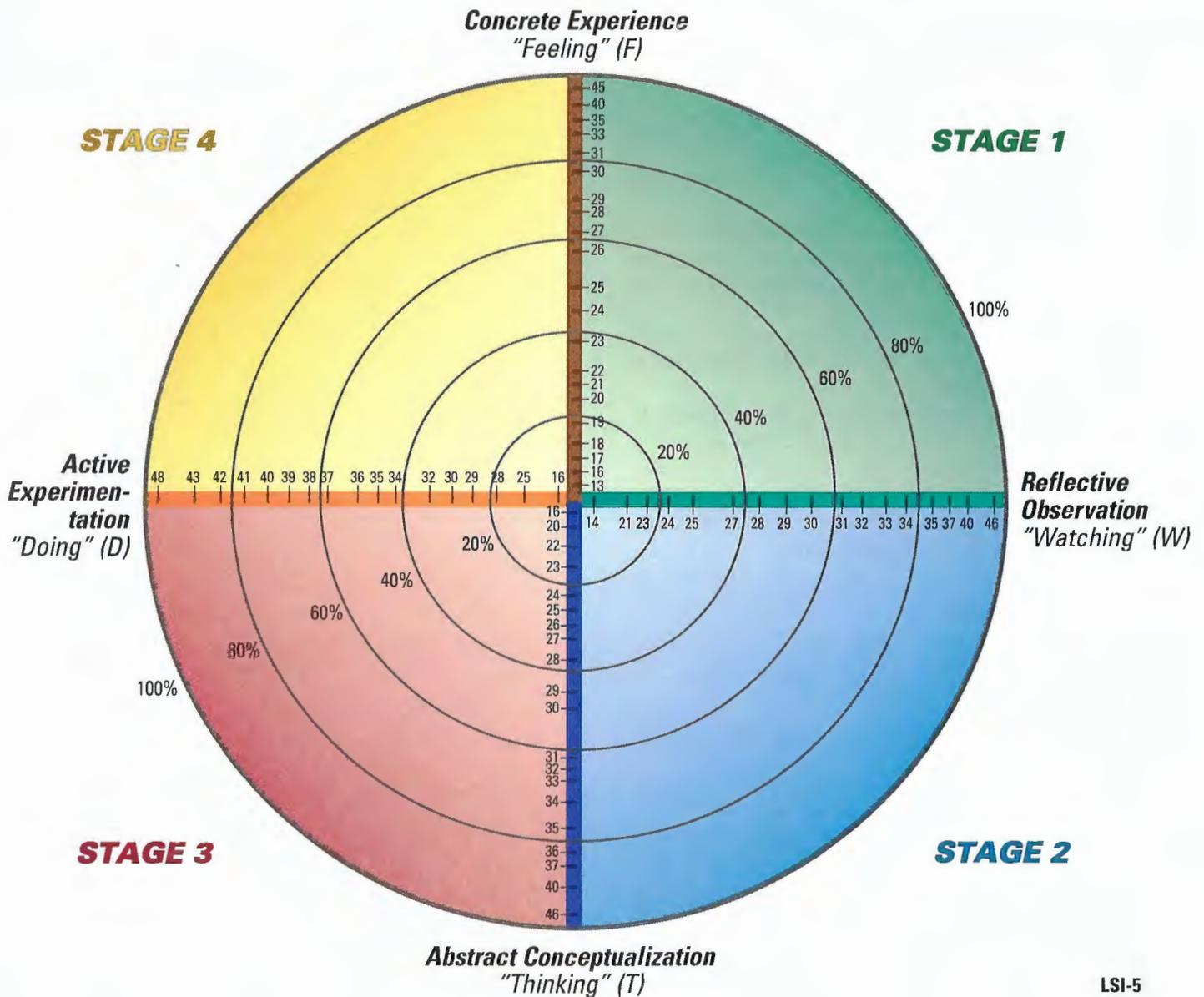
**Concrete Experience ("Feeling").** The number where you put your X on this line indicates your preference for learning things that have personal meaning. The higher your score on this line, the more you like to learn things that you feel are important and relevant to you today.

**Reflective Observation ("Watching").** Your number on this line indicates how important it is for you to reflect on the things you are learning. If your score is high on this line, you probably find it important to watch others as they learn about a topic you are studying. You probably like to plan things out and take time to make sure that you understand a topic accurately.

**Abstract Conceptualization ("Thinking").** Your number on this line indicates your preference for learning ideas, facts, and figures. If your score is high on this line, you probably like to absorb many concepts and gather lots of information on a new topic.

**Active Experimentation ("Doing").** Your number on this line indicates your preference for applying ideas, using trial and error, and practicing what you have learned. You enjoy hands-on activities.

**Step 5:** Now that you have filled out the Learning Style Graph, read page LSI-2 to further understand your preferred stage of learning.



# Cycle of Learning

One way to understand the four stages of learning is to see how they relate to actual examples of learning. Consider two activities: learning to ride a bicycle and learning to bungee jump.

## **Example 1: Learning to ride a bicycle**

When you learn to ride a bicycle, your learning begins with developing an interest in the task. This is natural. Unless forced, you seldom take the time to learn a skill that you find uninteresting. You might have become interested in riding a bicycle for many reasons. Maybe you wanted to keep up with your friends or to find a way to travel that's faster than walking.

The cycle of learning begins with Stage 1 where you develop an interest and a desire to learn a new skill. Then, you make a choice—in this case, a choice about whether to learn to ride a bicycle.

If you decide that riding a bicycle is what you want, then you move on to Stage 2. Here you gather information that can help you succeed in actually riding the bicycle. To gather this information, you can watch someone else ride a bicycle. You can also listen to someone else explain what to do with your hands and feet while riding.

After you gather information, you proceed to Stage 3. During this stage, you experiment to see if the information you gathered can actually help you ride a bicycle. To do this, you get on a bicycle and ride.

At this point, you enter Stage 4. In this stage of learning, you integrate what you've just practiced with what you learned about bicycle riding and other things you know. Even though you understand some basic mechanics of bike riding, you might have other questions: What if I need to stop suddenly? How do I turn a corner? What can I do if a dog gets in my path?

In turn, these questions create an interest (Stage 1) in gathering more information (Stage 2) that you can experiment with (Stage 3) and integrate into your day-to-day life (Stage 4). This illustrates how one learning experience generates similar experiences, leading you through the learning cycle many times.

## **Example 2: Learning to bungee jump**

Perhaps you've watched someone bungee jump. Many people prefer to watch this activity rather than participate. They witness a bungee jump and come to a conclusion: "This is one thing that I don't need to learn!" If this is true for you, then your learning ended with Stage 1. You chose not to move to Stage 2—gathering information. For example, you don't climb up onto a platform, look over the edge, or ask how to put on ankle straps.

Other people might proceed through Stage 2 and then stop. After gathering facts about bungee jumping, they may decide they have learned enough and choose not to take the plunge.

Others might decide to make the jump, however, and move on to action and practice—Stage 3. During the jump, they might integrate the experience with what else they know about life and add some new movement or flair to their jump, moving through Stage 4 of the learning cycle. And, if they recover, they may start the learning cycle all over again.

**Remove this sheet before completing  
the Learning Style Graph.**

*This page is inserted to ensure that the other writing you do in this book doesn't show through on page LSI-7.*

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**Remove this sheet before completing  
the Learning Style Graph.**

*This page is inserted to ensure that the other writing you do in this book doesn't show through on page LSI-7.*

**NOTE:** After completing your Learning Style Inventory (page LSI-1) and filling in the Learning Style Graph (page LSI-5), be sure to read the articles "Interpreting Your Learning Style Graph" (page LSI-2) and "Cycle of Learning" (page LSI-6). Then, complete the following Journal Entry.

**JOURNAL ENTRY**



Consider saving a copy of your responses to this exercise and including it in your portfolio.

**Discovery/Intention Statement**

Regarding my preferred stage of learning, I discovered that I...

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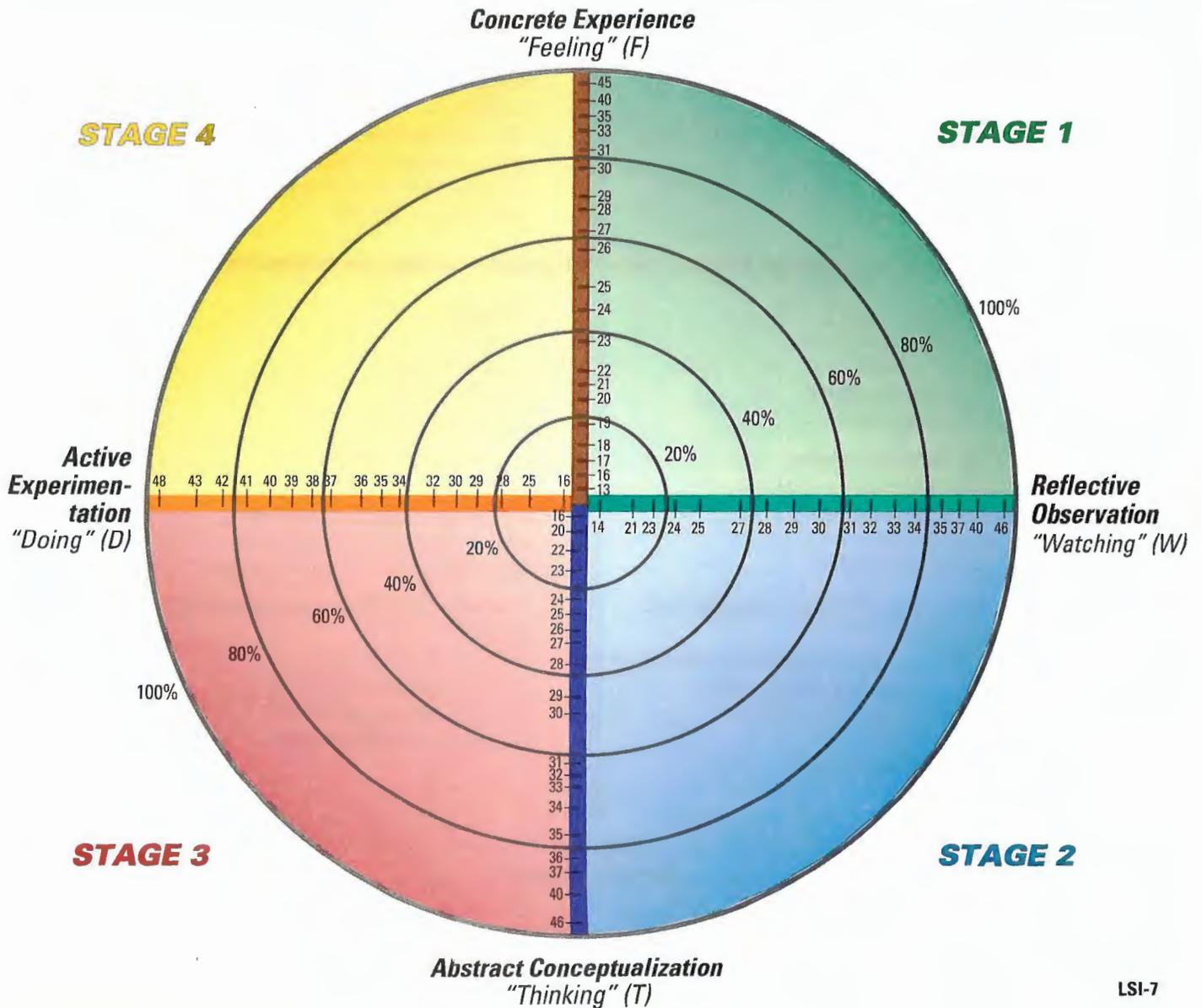
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Given my preferred stage of learning, I intend to...

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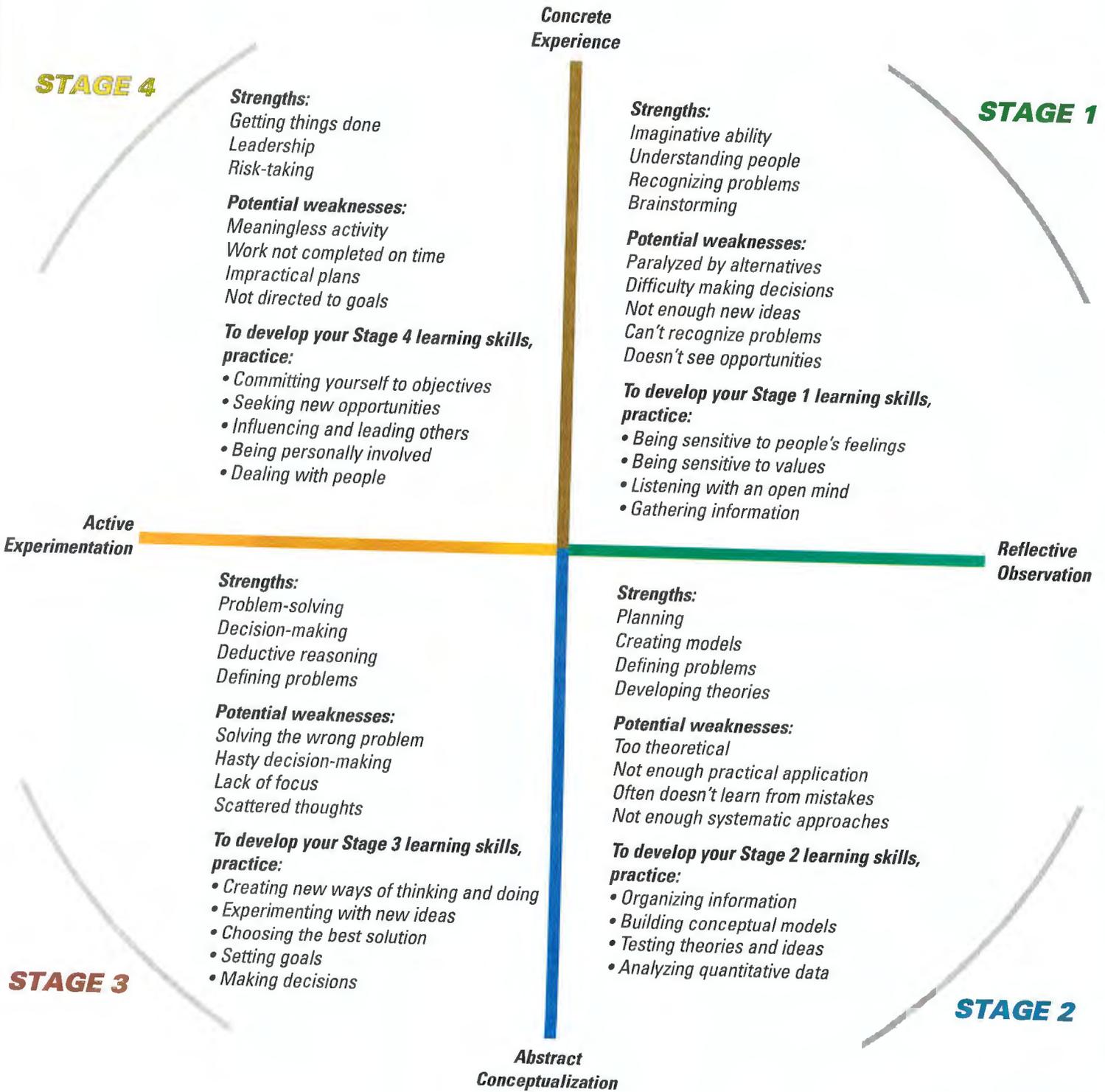
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# Potential Weaknesses and Strengths

The chart below identifies some of the potential weaknesses and strengths of people who have a strong preference for any one of the stages of learning. For example, if most of your kite is in Stage 2 of the Learning Style Graph, then look at the lower right-hand corner of this chart to see if this is an accurate description of you.

After reviewing the strengths and potential weaknesses for the stage that is your preference, read the sections of the other stages titled "To develop..." to see what you can do to strengthen your less-preferred stages of learning so you can become a more well-balanced student.





# Using your learning profile to succeed in school

**T**o get the most value from knowing your learning profile, look for ways to apply this knowledge in school and at work. Consider the suggestions that follow.

### ***Tolerate discomfort***

Discomfort is a natural part of the learning process. As you move through stages of the learning cycle that are not your preferred learning stage, allow yourself to feel the discomfort. Struggling during the stages of the learning cycle that are not your preferences is an indicator that you are balancing your learning preferences.

Neglecting certain stages, or moving too quickly through them, can interrupt your learning. With appropriate practice, you can expand your preferences and learn to feel comfortable using all four stages.

### ***Match activities to your learning profile***

You might want to examine your learning profile when choosing your major and planning your career. You could focus on courses or jobs that match your learning preferences. Asking people with other preferences for help also works great.

### ***Ask for what you want***

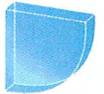
You might find that the way a teacher teaches is not always the way you prefer learning, and teachers don't always follow the complete cycle of learning. Once you know your learning preference, you can be more responsible for getting what you need to learn best.



- If you have a strong preference for Stage 1, you are likely to spend time observing others and planning before taking action. You probably also enjoy working with other students. To assist yourself in school, ask questions that help you understand

why it is important for you to learn about a specific topic. You might also want to make sure that you form study groups.

- If you have a strong preference for Stage 2, you are skilled in understanding theories and concepts. When in learning situations, you are likely to enjoy lectures and individual class assignments. Chances are that you also enjoy solitary time and are not fond of working in groups. To assist yourself in school, ask questions that help you gather enough information to understand what you are learning. You might also increase your effectiveness by choosing not to concentrate equally on all the material in a chapter. You could focus primarily on specific parts of the book where you dig in more deeply.



- If you have a strong preference for Stage 3, you probably excel at working with your hands and at laboratory stations. When in a learning situation, you are interested in knowing how things work. In addition, you probably enjoy working alone or with a small group. To assist yourself in school, ask questions that help you understand how something works and how you can experiment with these new ideas. Also, allow time to practice and apply what you learn. You can conduct experiments, do projects, complete homework, create presentations, conduct research, tabulate findings, or even write a rap song that summarizes key concepts. Such activities provide an opportunity to internalize your learning through hands-on practice.



- If you have a strong preference for Stage 4, you are skilled at teaching others what you have learned and helping others see the importance of this new learning. When in a learning situation, you like to apply facts and

theories in everyday life. You probably enjoy carrying out plans and having new and challenging experiences. You also enjoy working with others and are likely to have a large social circle. To assist yourself in school, ask questions that help you determine where else in your life you can apply what you have just learned. Also, seek opportunities to demonstrate your understanding. You could teach what you have learned to someone else, present findings from your research, report results from your experiments, demonstrate how your project works, or perform a rap song that someone else might have written.



### **Stay in charge of your learning**

When they experience difficulty in school, some students say: “The instructor can’t teach me.” Or, “The classroom is not conducive to the way I learn.” Or, “This teacher creates tests that are too hard for me.” Or, “In class, we never have time for questions.” Or, “The instructor doesn’t teach to my learning style.”

Such statements can become mental crutches—a set of beliefs that prevent you from taking charge of your learning. To support your self-responsibility, you could have thoughts and make statements such as: “I will discover why this information is valuable even though it isn’t obvious.” Or, “I will find out more information and facts about this.” Or, “I will discover how I can experiment with this information I am learning.” Or, “I will discover new ways to use this information in my life.” Or, “I will practice learning this information with the stages of learning that are not my preferred style.”

### **Associate with students who have different learning profiles**

If your instructor asks you to form a group to complete an assignment, avoid joining a group where everyone shares your preferred stage of learning. If you have all discovered your preferred learning stage, then you can ask around and get together with people who complement you. This is one way you can develop skills in all four

## **RESOURCES ON LEARNING STYLES**

*Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* by David A. Kolb (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984). Explains the theory of experiential learning, with applications to education, work, and personal development. Contains information on the validity of the *Learning Style Inventory*.

*Adaptive Style Inventory* by David A. Kolb and Richard Boyatzis (distributed by McBer & Company, Boston, MA 02116). An inventory to assess your adaptability in different learning situations.

*Learning Skills Profile* by David A. Kolb and Richard Boyatzis (distributed by McBer & Company, Boston, MA 02116). An instrument to compare your learning style to your job skill demands.

*Bibliography of Research on Experiential Learning and the Learning Style Inventory* (Boston: McBer, 1992). References to recent studies.

*The Learning Style Inventory* is distributed by McBer & Company, Inc.—a human resources, management consulting company located at 116 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02116.

*The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Style, With Right/Left Mode Techniques* by Bernice McCarthy (Barrington, IL: Excel Inc., 1980, 1987). The 4MAT model explains learning in terms of the ways people perceive and process information.



*Myers-Briggs Personality Profile and The Keirsey Temperament Sorter*. The Keirsey Temperament Sorter by David Keirsey is a personality test that scores results according to the

Myers-Briggs system (the actual Myers-Briggs test is a professional instrument and may only be administered by a licensed practitioner).





In 1482, Leonardo da Vinci wrote a letter to a wealthy

# THE Master Student

**IN EACH CHAPTER** of this text there is an example of a person who embodies several qualities of a master student.

As you read about these people and others like them, ask, “How can I use this?” Look for the timeless qualities in the people you read about. Many of the strategies used by master students from another time or place are tools you can use.

No list of master students can be complete. The master students in this book were chosen because they demonstrate novel ways to learn—not because they are the best or the only role

*This book is about something that cannot be taught.*

It’s about becoming a master student. A master is a person who has attained a level of skill that goes beyond technique. For a master, methods and procedures are automatic responses to the needs of the task. Work is effortless; struggle evaporates. The master carpenter is so familiar with her tools, they are part of her. 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 performances, the night when everything comes together.

Often the result of mastery is a sense of profound satisfaction, well-being, and timelessness. Work seems self-propelled. The master is in control by being out of control. He lets go and allows the creative process to work. That’s why after a spectacular performance, it is often said of an athlete or a performer, “He was playing out of his mind.”

Likewise, the master student is one who “learns out of her mind.” Of course, that statement makes no sense. Mastery, in fact, doesn’t make sense. It cannot be captured with words. It defies analysis. Mastery cannot be taught, only learned and experienced.

Examine the following list of characteristics of master students in light of your own experience. The list is not complete. It merely points in a direction. No one can teach us to be master students; we already *are* master students. We are natural learners by design. As students, we can discover that every day.

As you read, look for yourself. Following are some traits shared by master students.

## baron, applying for work. In excerpted form, he wrote,

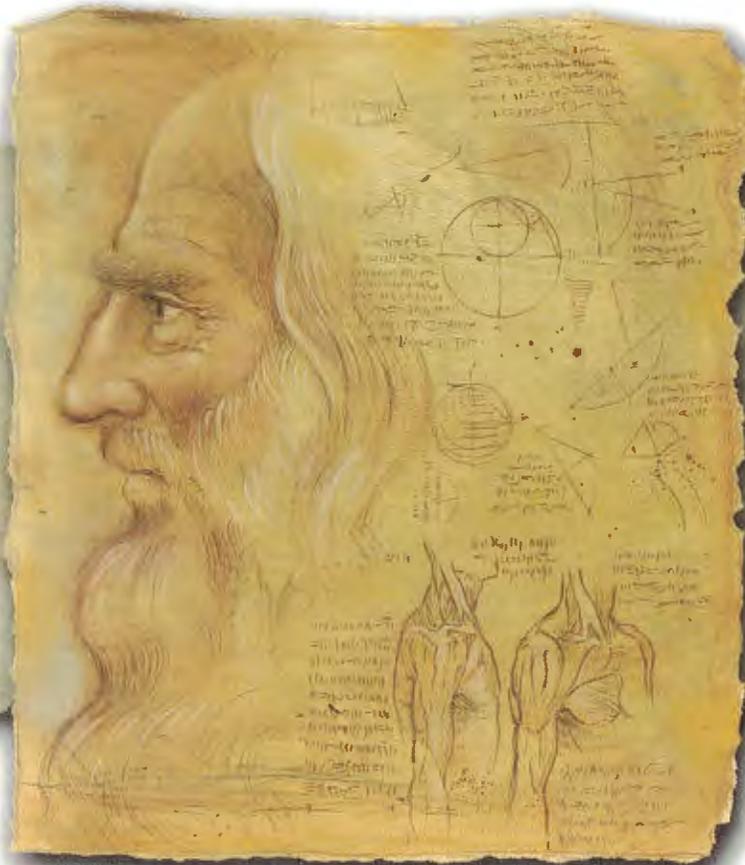
*"I can contrive various and endless means of offense and defense. . . . I have all sorts of extremely light and strong bridges adapted to be most easily carried. . . . I have methods for destroying every turret or fortress. . . . I will make covered chariots, safe and unassailable. . . . In case of need I will make big guns, mortars, and light ordnance of fine and useful forms out of the common type. . . ." And then, he added, almost as an afterthought, "In times of peace I believe I can give perfect satisfaction and to the equal of any other in architecture . . . can carry out sculpture . . . and also I can do in painting whatever may be done."*

The Mona Lisa, for example.

models. Round out the profiles in this book with other master students you've read about or know personally.

As you meet new people, look for those who excel at learning. The master student is not a vague or remote ideal.

Rather, master students move freely among us. In fact, there's one living inside your skin.



### ***Inquisitive***

The master student is curious about everything. By posing questions she can generate interest and aliveness in the most mundane, humdrum situations. When she is bored during a biology lecture, she thinks to herself, "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 she asks, "What can I do to get value out of this lecture, even though it seems boring?" And she finds an answer.

### ***Able to focus attention***

Watch a 2-year-old at play. Pay attention to the eyes. The wide-eyed look reveals an energy and a capacity

for amazement that keep his 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 him the world is always new.

### ***Willing to change***

The unknown does not frighten the master student. In fact, she welcomes it—even the unknown in herself. We all have pictures of who we think we are, and these pictures can be useful. They also can prevent learning and growth. The master student is open to changes in her environment and changes in herself.

### ***Able to organize and sort***

The master student can take a large body of information and sift through it to discover relationships. He can play with information, organizing pieces of data by size, color, order, weight, and a hundred other categories.

### ***Competent***

Mastery of skills is important to the master student. When she learns mathematical formulas, she studies them until they become second nature. She practices until she knows them cold, then practices an extra few minutes. She also is able to apply what she learns to new and different situations.

### **Joyful**

More often than not, the master student is seen with a smile on his face—sometimes a smile at nothing in particular other than amazement at the world and his experience of it.

### **Able to suspend judgment**

The master student has opinions and positions, and she is able to let go of them when appropriate. She realizes she is more than her thoughts. She can quiet her internal dialogue and listen to an opposing viewpoint. She doesn'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, she asks, "What if this were true?" and explores possibilities.

### **Energetic**

Notice the student with a spring in his step, the one who is enthusiastic and involved in class. When he reads, he often sits on the very edge of his chair, and he plays with the same intensity. He is a master student.

### **Well**

Health is important to the master student, though not necessarily in the sense of being free of illness. Rather, she values her body and treats it with respect. She tends to her emotional and spiritual health, as well as to her physical health.

### **Self-aware**

The master student is willing to evaluate himself and his behavior. He regularly tells the truth about his strengths and areas for improvement.

### **Responsible**

There is a difference between responsibility and blame, and the master student knows it well. She is willing to take responsibility for everything in her life—for events that most people would blame on others.

For example, if she is served cold eggs in the cafeteria, the master student chooses to take responsibility for getting cold eggs. This is not the same as blaming herself for cold eggs. Rather, she looks for ways to change the situation and get what she wants. She could choose to eat breakfast earlier, or she might tell someone in the kitchen that the eggs are cold and request a change. The cold eggs might continue. Even then, the master student takes responsibility and gives herself the power to choose her response to the situation.

### **Willing to risk**

The master student often takes on projects with no guarantee of success. He is willing to participate in class dialogues at the risk of looking foolish. He is willing to tackle difficult subjects in term papers. He welcomes the risk of a challenging course.

### **Willing to participate**

Don't look for the master student on the sidelines. She's in the game. She is a player who can be counted on. She is willing to make a commitment, and she can follow through.

### **A generalist**

The master student is interested in everything around him. He has a broad

base of knowledge in many fields and can find value that is applicable to his specialties.

### **Willing to accept paradox**

The word *paradox* comes from two Greek words, *para* (beyond) and *doxēn* (opinion). A paradox is something which is beyond opinion or, more accurately, something that may seem contradictory or absurd yet may actually have meaning.

For example, the master student can be committed to managing money and reaching her financial goals. At the same time, she can be totally detached from money, realizing that her real worth is independent of how much money she has. The master student recognizes the limitations of the mind and is at home with paradox. She can accept that ambiguity.

### **Courageous**

The master student admits his fear and fully experiences it. For example, he will approach a tough exam as an opportunity to explore feelings of anxiety and tension related to the pressure to perform. He does not deny fear, he embraces it.

### **Self-directed**

Rewards or punishments provided by others do not motivate the master student. Her motivation to learn comes from within.

### **Spontaneous**

The master student is truly in the here and now. He is able to respond to the moment in fresh, surprising, and unplanned ways.

### **Relaxed about grades**

Grades make the master student neither depressed nor euphoric. She recognizes that sometimes grades are important, and grades are not the only reason she studies. She does not measure her value as a human being by the grades she receives.

### **Intuitive**

The master student has a sense that is beyond logic. He has learned to trust his feelings, and he works to develop that sense.

### **Creative**

Where others see dullness and trivia, the master student sees opportunities to create. She can gather pieces of knowledge from a wide range of subjects and put them together in a new way. The master student is creative in every aspect of her life.

### **Willing to be uncomfortable**

The master student does not place comfort first. When discomfort is necessary to reach a goal, he is willing to experience it. He can endure personal discomfort and can look at unpleasant things with detachment.

### **Accepting**

The master student accepts herself, the people around her, and the challenges that life offers.

### **Willing to laugh**

The master student might laugh at any moment, and her sense of humor includes the ability to laugh at herself.

## Hungry

Human beings begin life with a natural appetite for knowledge. In some people it soon gets dulled. The master student has tapped that hunger, and it gives him a desire to learn for the sake of learning.

## Willing to work

Once inspired, the master student is willing to follow through with sweat. She knows 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. He also cares about people and values learning from others. He flourishes in a community that values

“win-win” outcomes, cooperation, and love.

## The master student in you

The master student is in all of us. By design, human beings are learning machines. We have an innate ability to learn, and all of us have room to grow and improve.

It also is important to note the distinction between learning and being taught. Human beings can resist being taught anything. Carl Rogers<sup>6</sup> goes so far as to say that anything that can be taught to a human being is either inconsequential or just plain harmful. What is important in education, Rogers asserts, is learning. And everyone has the ability to learn.

Unfortunately, people also learn to hide that ability.

As they experience the pain sometimes associated with learning, they shut down. If a child experiences feeling foolish in front of a group of people, he could learn to avoid those situations. In doing so, the child restricts his possibilities.

Some children “learn” that they are slow learners. If they learn it well enough, their behavior comes to match that label.

As people grow older, they accumulate a growing list of ideas to defend, a fat catalog of experiences that tell them not to risk learning.

Still, the master student within survives. To tap that resource, you don’t need to acquire anything. You already have everything you need. Every day you can rediscover the natural learner within you.

## MASLOW'S qualities of a self-actualizing person

Abraham Maslow<sup>7</sup> was a psychologist who worked on a theory of psychological health rather than sickness. Maslow studied people whom he called “self-actualizing,” which means, in part, healthy and creative. He listed traits he found in self-actualizing people (ranging from Albert Einstein to anthropologist Ruth Benedict). These characteristics also describe the master student.

### THE SELF-ACTUALIZING PERSON:

- is reality-oriented.
- is accepting of herself and others.
- is spontaneous.
- is problem-centered rather than self-centered.
- is detached and in need of privacy.
- is independent.
- has fresh, rather than stereotyped, appreciation of people.
- has had a mystical or spiritual experience.
- identifies with the human race as a whole.
- has a few deep, intimate relationships.
- has democratic values.
- has a philosophical rather than bitter sense of humor.
- has creative resources.
- is resistant to conformity.
- is transcendent of the environment.

## JOURNAL ENTRY



Consider saving a copy of your responses to this Journal Entry and including it in your portfolio.

## Discovery Statement

After reading “The master student,” consider your own strengths and list the qualities of a master student that you observe in yourself. This is no easy task. Most of us are competent self-critics, but we tend to discount our strong points. If you get stuck trying to complete this Journal Entry, warm up by brainstorming all your good points on a separate sheet of paper. Remember to consider experiences both in and out of school.

The master student qualities I observe in myself include . . .

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In the space below, write a specific example of how you model one of these qualities.

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**E**ducation has a special significance for me. I was raised in Mexico until the age of seventeen. Three years ago my family moved to the United States where I entered school as a junior without knowing a word of English. It was not easy sitting in class attempting to learn a subject while simultaneously learning the language. I could not communicate with the Americans, and the Mexicans wanted nothing to do with me. I often felt completely alone.

While things were difficult at school, they were worse at home. No one in my family could speak English, so no one could help me. My parents were

master student  
**VERONICA  
ESPINOZA**

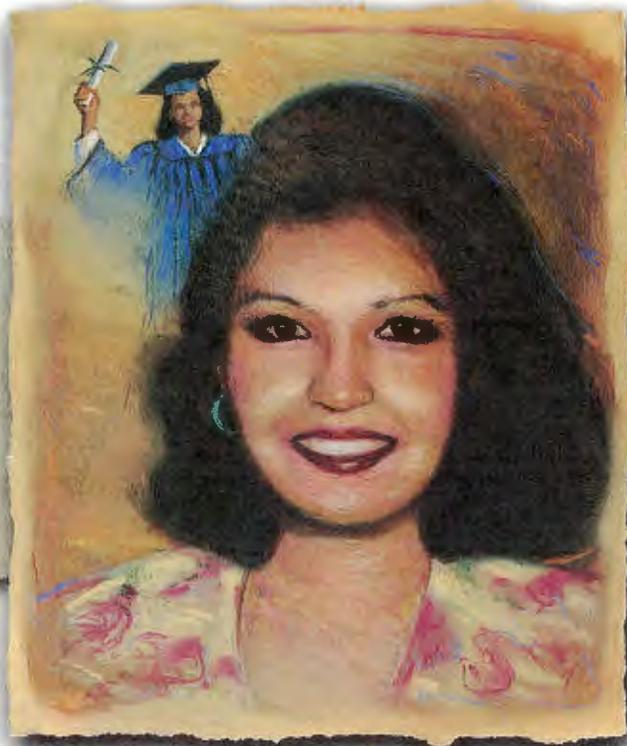
oblivious to what I was going through at school. All they knew was that they needed help with the children at home. I often felt like giving up and throwing everything out the window. After all, my family was happy with me staying home helping out. Somehow I knew I could not give up. I continued to plug along and learned to be patient with myself and hold on to my desire to learn. This attitude helped me find people who could help me and support me with my school work.

I also learned to overcome others' perception of me. Since I could not speak English and I was shy, many schools labeled me as "slow" or "incapable." Some teachers asked to have me removed from their class because they did not feel I could pass. I fought this phenomenon. . . . I told the teachers and counselors that I thought I could do it and refused to change classes. At the end of typing class, I was the fastest typist in the class. The teacher apologized and congratulated me for my persistence and accomplishments. As a master student, I have learned not to accept NO for an answer. Sometimes even the professionals are wrong. . . .

I even had to go against my family for the sake of my education. My family does not support my post-secondary education. From their perspective, a Latina has only the option of finding a man to take care of her. . . . Though I am paying for classes through a scholarship, I still fight my family in order to go to classes and study at home. . . .

In the three years since my arrival, I have learned English while retaining my Spanish. I completed high school with a G.P.A. of 3.0, and have earned all A's and B's in my college courses at Prairie State College.

These kinds of accomplishments can be seen and measured. However, I have also grown



used Becoming a Master Student and won Houghton Mifflin Company's scholarship while a student at Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, Illinois.

interpersonally. I have learned to fall in love with education and learned that

education is my ticket to changing the future for myself and my family. I have learned to reject rejection and beat the odds because there are many ways to skin a cat. When a door is locked, I look for another door to knock on. When I am told that "it is impossible," I have learned to say "OK" and go on to conquer the impossible.

*From Student Success—  
A Newsletter of College Survival, May 1996.*

For more information on ways that Veronica Espinoza created her success in school, connect to Houghton Mifflin's student success site on the World Wide Web at:

Info  Search

# Quiz

- 1 Explain three ways that you can use knowledge of your learning styles to succeed in school.
  
- 2 List three artifacts that you could already place in your portfolio.
  
- 3 The purpose of the Discovery and Intention Journal Entry System is to keep you at a constant level of excitement about learning. True or False? Explain your answer.
  
- 4 Our internal chatter and mental pictures can assist or hamper our success. What is one way to minimize negative images?
  
- 5 Which one of the following best illustrates the suggestion to choose observable criteria for success?
  - (A) Work harder at math.
  - (B) Create 10 flash cards covering the main points in Tuesday's lecture on the Spanish Civil War.
  - (C) Find a tutor sometime this quarter.
  
- 6 The guidelines for writing Discovery Statements do not include:
  - (A) Record the specifics.
  - (B) Notice your inner voices and pictures.
  - (C) Notice physical sensations.
  - (D) Trust expectations about what you will discover.
  - (E) Use discomfort as a signal.
  
- 7 List at least five guidelines for writing Intention Statements.

# Quiz

C O N T I N U E D

- 8 According to the text, a master student is willing to accept paradox. Give an example of a paradox that is relevant to succeeding in school.
- 9 List ten examples of artifacts that you could include in your portfolio.
- 10 If you want the ideas in this book to work, you must believe in them, says Power Process #1. True or False? Explain your answer.

## JOURNAL ENTRY



### Discovery/Intention Statement

Review your experience of this chapter and complete the following sentence.

In reading and doing this chapter, I discovered that I . . .

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Now, write a plan about something specific that you learned and intend to use from this chapter. Include how and when you intend to use it.

I intend to use the following strategy:

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In order to use this strategy, I will . . .

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# Learning Styles Application Chapter 1

Even though each of us has preferred ways to learn new material, it is useful to review that material using all stages of learning. The questions below will “cycle” you through four learning stages. A similar Learning Styles Application appears at the end of every chapter in this book. Write your responses to these exercises on a separate sheet of paper. For more information about learning styles, reread the article “Learning styles—Discovering how you learn” on page 22.

**Stage 4** Now consider your commitment to these ideas by evaluating the amount of effort you gave to learning each one. Use the following priority scale.

- A = I gave my best effort to learning this idea.
- B = I made a reasonable effort to learn this idea.
- C = I could do more to learn this idea.

Finally, go beyond the classroom. Describe ways to use these ideas that can make your work life or relationships more rewarding.

**Stage 3** Using the 15 items you just listed, rank them from (1) most important idea I taught myself to (15) least important idea I taught myself. After you have ranked them, write an Intention Statement describing how you plan to put each idea into practice.

**Stage 1** Write a short paragraph explaining (1) ways you have applied any of the following ideas (or related ideas) in your life prior to reading this chapter and (2) how further mastering these ideas could make a positive difference in your education.

- Telling the truth about your current abilities
- Writing a journal focused on self-discovery and intention
- Creating a portfolio
- Considering ideas as tools

**Stage 2** After reviewing the above topics, list 15 new ideas or suggestions you learned from this chapter. Include those that you already knew about but have never used.



## Bibliography

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Robert Mager, *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (Belmont, CA: Fearon, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Kimeldorf, *Portfolio Power: The New Way to Showcase All Your Job Skills and Experiences* (Princeton, NJ: Peterson's, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> William Bridges, *Jobshift* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> William James, *Pragmatism and Other Essays* (New York: Washington Square, 1963).

<sup>5</sup> David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> Abraham Maslow, *The Further Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 1971).



### ADDITIONAL READING

James, William. *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*, New York: Norton, 1983.

Riso, Don. *Understanding the Enneagram: The Practical Guide to Personality Types*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.