

# To the Teacher

## Introduction

*Strategies for College Success* is an academic study skills book primarily for English language learners who are planning to attend an American college or who may already be enrolled in their first year of a community college or a four-year college. The book may also be used for college success seminars for first-year students; native or near-native English speakers needing a stronger foundation for college success can benefit from the skills and strategies presented here. The book introduces all students to the language and culture of college.

*Strategies for College Success* may be used as a text for a general study skills class or as a supplementary text for a class with a writing focus. Though the book emphasizes communication skills for group situations and many of the activities are designed with groups in mind, the book can also be used for self-study.

The main goal of this text is to encourage students to become self-directed learners and better participants in an academic community. Students need strong academic skills in order to thrive in college classes alongside native English speakers or more conventionally prepared college students. However, information about the expectations and the “culture” of college is also important. Students often experience a kind of “culture shock” when they get to college, whether or not they are from another country. Therefore, this book combines academic study skills with activities and information designed to help students adjust to other aspects of North American college life. Students who use this book will gain confidence in expressing their ideas both orally and in writing. They will have the confidence to approach a wide variety of assignments and communicative tasks awaiting them in their first year of college and beyond. Finally, they will learn what rights and responsibilities they have as members of an academic community, thereby empowering themselves to become active learners and get the most out of their college experience.

## Key Features

Some of the key features of this book are as follows:

- **An integrated skills approach** helps students face a wide range of communicative tasks, including participating in class and small

group discussions, delivering oral presentations, approaching various types of writing assignments, recognizing different types of test questions, taking and organizing lecture notes, creating graphic organizers, and improving reading proficiency.

- **Authentic, cross-curricular readings** include brief selections from textbooks currently used in North American college courses, as well as articles from magazines, newspapers, and journals of academic interest. The reading content represents academic disciplines within the broad categories of Humanities, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Business. The cross-curricular subject matter also introduces students to the concept of academic disciplines and the habit of evaluating different types of sources.
- **An audio component with academic lectures** gives students the opportunity to practice listening to academic lectures and taking notes. The lectures relate to the theme of each chapter. They also represent content and vocabulary from a variety of academic disciplines: anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy/ethics, and American history/American studies. The listening component of this book may also help students prepare for the listening section on the Next Generation TOEFL<sup>®</sup> test. An audio compact disk is available.
- **Carefully sequenced questions, activities, and writing prompts** following readings and lectures guide students through the processes of comprehension, critical thinking, inference, and analysis that first-year college students must be able to engage in.
- **A combination of individual and collaborative activities** encourages students both to think independently and to work with a group. Speaking skills are emphasized to reduce anxiety commonly associated with class discussions and oral presentations. Students will be prepared to succeed in classes that have a strong “class participation” component.
- **Writing activities of varying lengths and levels of difficulty** allow instructors to use this text in mixed-ability classrooms. Writing tasks can be modified to meet the needs of their classes or of individual students. Cross-references to a separate writing section allow instructors to implement a writing focus if they choose.

- **Graphics strategies** sections provide practice with graphic literacy. Students interpret data in commonly used graphic organizers. They also create their own graphs with information related to the chapter theme.
- **“Orientation” sections** introduce students to important resources in an academic community. Students learn about resources such as Campus Learning Centers, Health and Counseling Services, and Career Services. Students can visit local colleges, explore their current academic community, or research colleges online to locate these various resources for themselves.
- **Test-taking strategies** expose students to the main types of test questions they will encounter: multiple choice, short answer, essay questions, and timed essays. Practice test items allow students to apply the test-taking strategy to the content they have learned in the chapter. Additional chapter tests can be found on the website companion to this text.
- **Check Your Progress** self-assessment charts and questions raise students’ awareness of their own learning style and processes. They also inform the instructor about what material might need to be reviewed.
- **Study tips** occur throughout the book. Approximately five tips per chapter appear in boxes. Students can be encouraged to try these tips on their own and report—orally or in a journal—how and when they applied these tips.

## How to Use This Book

Part 1, which uses an integrated skills approach, presents learning strategies in six chapters. Each content-based chapter focuses on a different theme: *Time, Learning, Communities, Innovations, Health, and Work*. The broad themes allow ample opportunity for students to connect their own life experiences and academic interests to the readings and lectures. For students who have not yet determined a focus of academic interest, the exposure to readings and ideas from different disciplines may spark interest in pursuing a particular area of study in college or at least taking a class in that subject.

Part 2, which focuses on writing issues, contains two chapters. While this book does not go into as much detail about writing compared with texts that are focused on writing skills, it does present an overview of the writing process, paragraph format, and essay format. Part 2 can be used in conjunction with the chapters in Part 1; writing tasks in Part 1 are cross-referenced with appropriate sections in Part 2.

Each chapter in Part 1 uses the same format:

- **Warm-Up.** Activities are designed to get students thinking and talking about the chapter theme. Chapter openers take the form of individual questionnaires, ranking activities, classroom surveys, and discussion questions. Students can discuss their responses in small groups and/or write them as informal journal entries.
- **Key Words.** Ten key vocabulary words for the chapter are presented, and a practice activity is provided. Students may encounter these key words in various chapter activities, the chapter reading, and the chapter listening activity. Instructors may wish to quiz students on the key words periodically if they desire more emphasis on vocabulary. *Students should use an English-English dictionary for the vocabulary exercises.*
- **Vocabulary Strategies.** One or two vocabulary strategies are presented in each chapter. The strategies are reviewed and recycled in subsequent chapters.
- **Speaking Strategy.** Each section presents a strategy for oral communication, from participating in discussions to giving a presentation. Students should consciously apply the strategy at some point during a discussion or class, and account for it in the self-assessment chart at the end of the chapter.
- **Reading Strategy.** One or two reading strategies are presented in each chapter. The strategies are then applied to the chapter reading. Reading strategies are reviewed and recycled in subsequent chapters. Additionally, instructors may wish to provide additional readings related to the chapter themes and have students apply the reading strategies to them.
- **Chapter Readings.** Each chapter contains a selection from an authentic college textbook, an academic article, or a magazine or news article of academic interest. More advanced classes could be encouraged to read—or find—additional readings related to the

topics. The reading selections for this text are of varying lengths. Some chapter readings are relatively short, yet they may have more challenging vocabulary or content compared to some of the longer readings. In addition to the chapter readings, very short readings (one to five paragraphs) are provided in the vocabulary section of each chapter. While these readings may be used for discussion or writing activities, their primary purpose is to help students apply the vocabulary strategies. Finally, in-text citations and footnotes from the original articles have been removed so that students can focus on the content and on reading/vocabulary strategies.

- **Academic Listening Strategies.** Each chapter includes one or more listening strategies to help students take effective notes and listen for certain types of information. Students can then listen to the lectures on the audio component that accompanies this text and apply the listening strategies. Alternatively, the instructor may read the lectures aloud from the transcripts in the back of the book.
- **Academic Lectures.** The lectures recorded on the audio component represent various academic disciplines and topics. While they are not authentic lectures from college classes, they are written to expose students to some of the language associated with these disciplines at the college level. The pace of these lectures is slightly slower than it would be in an actual college classroom. This slower pace is designed to help students practice listening for important information and taking notes. Examples of good student notes are provided in the appendix, and students should be encouraged to compare their results.
- **Writing Strategies.** One or more writing strategies are presented in each chapter. This section may be supplemented with appropriate pages in Part 2 or with an additional writing text or handbook. Models of student writing for various writing tasks are included in the cross-referenced writing section. However, these writing samples have been corrected and modified. It is important to reassure students that the *sample student works do not represent first drafts*.

- **Writing Task.** For each task there is a choice of topics for paragraphs or essays related to the chapter theme. Instructors should consider the level of the class or the needs of their students in determining whether to assign paragraphs or essays. The topic choices also help instructors to accommodate mixed-ability classes. Topic 1 is suitable for lower-level writers, Topic 2 for intermediate writers, and Topic 3 for more advanced writers. More advanced students should be encouraged to write full-length essays and to choose the third topic choice. Beginning writers could be asked to write paragraphs. Alternatively, a class with a strong writing component might start with paragraph-length assignments and Topic 1 choices, working up to essay-length assignments and Topic 3 choices by the end of the course. Finally, regardless of the level of writers, peer review should be encouraged; students can read each other's drafts and respond to them with the aid of a checklist of key points to look for. These checklists can also be used for students to check their own work on a subsequent revision. See pages 225–27.
- **Graphics Strategy.** Information related to the chapter theme, to the chapter reading, or to some aspect of college life is presented in the form of a graphic organizer. Students will learn strategies for interpreting graphs as well as for creating their own. Students can be encouraged to create graphic organizers to help them understand what they read, to consider ideas for a writing assignment, or to use as part of their final project in each chapter.
- **Test-Taking Strategy.** Each chapter includes a test-taking strategy and demonstrates the process of working through different types of test items. Students can then practice the strategy with several additional test questions. More chapter tests, which can be used to assess students' mastery of the content of each chapter, can be found on the companion website for this book. See [www.press.umich.edu/esl/](http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/).
- **Orientation.** This section introduces students to various aspects of college life, such as campus resources and officials. The Orientation activities ask students to explore the resources at their existing school or to research them at a local college or online. The

activities may be expanded to allow for more formal group presentations or for additional writing practice.

- **Final Project.** Each chapter concludes with options for a written and/or oral project. These final projects can be omitted, used selectively, modified, or expanded, at the instructor's discretion. The final project options ask students to take the theme of the chapter outside the classroom in some way, perhaps by conducting field research (surveying American students on a topic related to the readings or lectures or observing and taking notes somewhere) or by conducting relevant Internet or library research. Students can then present the information in the form of an essay, a report, or an oral presentation. Final projects can be individual or collaborative. The flexibility of the final project topics allows instructors to tailor these projects to the needs of their classes.
- **Check Your Progress.** Students should use the assessment charts and questions to evaluate how well they feel they have understood and applied the skills presented in the chapter, and to identify what they should continue to work on.

## Pacing

*Strategies for College Success* is adaptable to different types of courses. For semester-long programs (12–14 weeks), instructors may wish to spend approximately two weeks on each chapter. For programs of fewer than 12 weeks, instructors might only teach selected chapters. If instructors are unable to cover the entire text in a course, they can omit some of the tasks or the final projects; they may also assign some of the tasks as homework rather than as in-class activities. For a two-semester course, instructors can have students do most of the tasks in class. They can also encourage the development of reading and writing skills by supplementing this text with additional readings and writing activities. Instructors might also encourage expansion activities and completion of all the final projects.