Motivation and Learning Strategies for College Success
A Self-Management Approach

Third Edition

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As readers of this book, you are a diverse group with varied backgrounds and goals. Some of you are beginning your education at a college or university, whereas others of you have selected community colleges. Some of you may have taken college courses last term, whereas others are returning to school after an absence. Some of you are taking a learning and study skills course because it is required, whereas others are enrolled in the course as an elective. Some of you are looking forward to taking the course, whereas others may doubt its usefulness. Although we recognize the wide range of interests, motivations, and abilities of those of you reading this book, we have one goal: to help all those who read this volume become more successful learners. Once you learn how to learn, you can apply these skills to any academic or work setting in which you participate.

Who is a successful learner? Most of us know, read about, or have observed successful and expert individuals in some field or profession (e.g., a plumber, musician, athlete, teacher, or artist). These individuals have special knowledge and skills in a particular field. Similarly, successful learners also possess special knowledge and skills that differentiate them from less successful learners.
Successful students are not simply individuals who know more than others. They also have more effective and efficient learning strategies for accessing and using their knowledge, can motivate themselves, and can monitor and change their behaviors when learning does not occur.

Just as individuals cannot learn to become expert musicians, dancers, or golfers without practice, learning to be a successful learner requires more than simply reading and listening to class lectures. For this reason, you will be asked throughout this book to respond to questions and exercises, and to actually practice some new ways of learning. The key to success is practicing the learning strategies taught here so they become automatic. As you practice, you will be able to learn more material in less time than prior to using these new strategies. Thus, you will learn to study “smarter,” not necessarily harder.

Most of you have expertise in some activity or hobby. You have spent considerable effort and persistence in acquiring knowledge and developing your skills and probably feel competent and motivated to excel. You are now beginning the process of developing the necessary expertise to meet the academic demands of college learning. Much of the same self-discipline and self-motivation you apply to your present area(s) of expertise will be needed in your pursuit of academic excellence. After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify specific behaviors that influence the level of academic success.
- Use a process to self-manage your academic behavior.

**WHAT IS ACADEMIC SELF-MANAGEMENT?**

At one time, it was thought that intelligence was the main factor determining academic success. After years of research in learning and motivation, educators have found that students can learn how to become more successful learners by using appropriate strategies to manage their motivation, behavior, and learning.

The word *management* is a key term in understanding successful learners. They self-manage or control the factors influencing their learning. They establish optimum conditions for learning and remove obstacles that interfere with their learning. Educators use a variety of terms to describe these students (e.g., *self-regulated, self-directed, strategic,* and *active*). No matter what term is used, the important factor is that these students find a way to learn. It does not matter if the instructor is a poor lecturer, the textbook is confusing, the test is difficult, the room is noisy, or if multiple exams are scheduled for the same week, successful learners find a way to excel.
Let's look at an example of how one student managed his academic learning:

It was Thursday night and Robert was completing his final preparation for the following day's history exam. On the previous Sunday evening, he developed a plan for how he would prepare for the exam during the week. He identified what he had to learn, how he would study, and when he would accomplish each task. He began his study on Monday, attempting to gain a general understanding of the main ideas and recall the most important facts. He paraphrased each section of the readings, underlined the important information, and monitored his own progress during study by developing possible questions that might be asked on the exam. While studying Wednesday night, he realized that he had difficulty comparing and contrasting some of the battles discussed in class. Therefore, he decided to develop a chart listing the different battles on top and different characteristics down the side. When he filled in the information on the chart, he found he was better able to answer the questions that might be asked regarding the material.

Around 10 p.m., Thursday, Robert's roommate came home from the library with some friends and began discussing a concert they planned to attend over the weekend. They were finished studying for the night. Robert decided to go to the study lounge down the hall to complete his last hour of studying. He told his friends that he would return for pizza around 11 p.m. As he returned to his study, he noticed some information in his notes that he did not understand. He made a quick telephone call to a friend for clarification about the notes.

After another 20 minutes of studying, Robert got tired and started thinking of the double cheese and mushroom pizza he would be eating in a short time. He decided that he needed about 30 minutes to finish his studying for the evening. Therefore, he decided to take a 5-minute break and go for a walk. He came back and finished his study for the evening.

What actions did Robert take to ensure optimum learning? First, he established a goal and action plan for how he was going to prepare for the examination. The plan started 4 days before the exam. Second, he used a variety of learning strategies, such as underlining, developing and answering questions, and making a chart to better compare and contrast the relevant information. In other words, when he found that...
he was not learning, he did something about it by changing his learning strategy. Third, he monitored his understanding of the material as he studied. He changed learning strategies and asked for help when he failed to understand his notes. Fourth, when his friends returned from the library, he decided that he would not be able to study in his room, so he left for the lounge. Finally, when he began to get tired and became less motivated to complete his studying, he took a break and was then able to return to his work. All of Robert's decisions played a major role in his ability to do well on the history exam the following day.

Given the same situation, think about how another student with less knowledge about learning and study strategies, and less self-management skills might have behaved in the same situation. The example just presented came from a student's journal. The situation occurred exactly as stated, only "the name was changed to protect the innocent." Robert did not come to college as an A student. As a matter of fact, he struggled during the first few weeks of the first term. When he began to learn how to learn and to take responsibility for his own learning, his academic performance improved dramatically.

As you develop the personal qualities to manage your learning, you will find that you can apply the same skills to situations outside the classroom, even at work. It does not matter what course, seminar, lecture, or job you experience, once you manage the factors influencing your learning, you can be more successful in any task.

One of the first author's students came to his office to discuss the amount of work she had to do in the learning course. She tended to turn in assignments late and, in general, appeared to have difficulty managing her time and motivation. During the conversation, she stated that she only wanted a C in the course. The first author stated that he had no problem giving her a C, but that many students who set this standard often underestimate their achievement and earn a D. He decided to pursue the issue further by asking the student the following question: "Are you also willing to find an average job and get an average salary?" "Oh no!" she stated, "I want a rewarding career and plan on making a great deal of money!"

Many individuals fail to realize that the self-management strategies used to become more successful learners often generalize to their personal and work lives. Who is more likely to be promoted in a job: an employee who can work independently and set and attain goals, or an employee who needs constant supervision and direction in his or her daily work? Educators who emphasize the importance of self-management take the position that students can do a great deal to promote their own learning through the use of different learning and motivational strategies. In other words, these learners "view academic learning as something they do for themselves rather than as something that is done to or for them" (Zimmerman, 1998b, p. 1).
Think about Zimmerman's quote and what it means to you as someone who is attempting to become a more successful learner. What are some of the changes you think you may have to make?

We have taught thousands of undergraduates and have come to the conclusion that we as instructors cannot make students learn if they do not want to. We can help them and guide them, but we cannot make them learn. It is a joy to work with students who take an active role in their own learning. However, some students say they want to learn but do not want to do the things that are necessary to manage their own learning. How many times have you observed parents and teachers prodding or almost begging students to learn? In many cases, these students really want to be successful, but they do not fully understand their responsibilities in the learning process.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE?

One of the major differences in the transition from high school to college classrooms is the change from a teacher-directed to a student-directed environment. In high school, many teachers tend to guide students' learning by telling them what, when, and how to learn. For example, when assignments are given, high school teachers frequently help students manage the tasks necessary to complete the assignment, such as requiring outlines or drafts of papers. In college, students are on their own. They can ask questions and obtain more information about an assignment, but rarely does a college instructor monitor students' progress. In college, students are expected to manage their own learning.

Another difference between high school and college is that high school teachers often spend considerable time attempting to motivate students to learn, whereas college instructors generally expect students to be self-motivated. Although students are told about the demands of college, many freshmen experience culture shock when they enter learning environments that differ from their past experiences. The following are comments written in a journal by a student in her first term in college:

My professor was completing his last lecture on the first unit of the course and asked if we had any questions. We had to read chapters in three different textbooks, and I had about 40 pages of notes. I simply asked: "Could you tell us what are some of the important ideas you might cover on the exam?" He looked at me and said: "That's for you to determine!" Well, I felt like crawling under my desk. In high school, most
of my teachers would summarize the key ideas that would
direct our studying behavior. Here, I quickly learned that I
have to do this work on my own!

This student had some difficulty in her first college term. She realized
that she had to change some of her learning and study strategies. When
she learned how to identify the main ideas in lectures and textbooks,
she had little trouble predicting most of the test questions in her courses.
Her ability to modify and manage her methods of learning were impor-
tant factors in her improvement toward the end of the term.

WHY ARE SOME STUDENTS LESS SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS?

When discussing the reasons for low achievement, we are not includ-
ing students who have serious learning disabilities, poor language skills,
or who have experienced an inadequate education because of factors
beyond their control. Instead, we are referring to students who should
be achieving higher than their present performance. In many cases,
more than one explanation may be appropriate for a given student.

They Hold Faulty Beliefs About Their Ability, Learning, and Motivation

Students’ beliefs about learning and motivation influence their behav-
iors. The following beliefs can impact achievement: If students believe
they are less capable than others, they may spend considerable time
using failure-avoiding strategies in the classroom (e.g., trying not to be
called on, copying material from friends, and appearing to be trying
hard when they really are not). Other students who believe they can
achieve are more likely to spend their time using effective learning and
study strategies, and tend to persist longer on difficult tasks.

Some students believe that ability or intelligence is fixed. That is,
people are born with a certain amount of ability, and there is not much
that can be done about it. This misperception often causes some stu-
dents to accept their low achievement or to become satisfied with a B
or C average, thinking that only the brightest students obtain an A.
Psychologists have found that intelligence is the result of how much
information students know and the strategies they use to control their
thinking and learning. In other words, “smart” students do not possess
abilities that other students cannot learn. “Smart” students study more
effectively than other students. If other students learn and use these
same methods, they become “smart.”

It is unfortunate that many students go through school thinking they
are not good learners and that little can be done to improve their achieve-
ment. This faulty belief often remains with individuals throughout their
lives and limits their goals and aspirations. The problem is not that these students are incapable of being successful learners, they simply have not been taught how to study and learn effectively.

They Are Unaware of Their Ineffective Learning Behavior

Many students believe that if they simply spend a good deal of time studying, they will be successful. Successful learners do work hard, but they realize that how they study is more important than how much time they spend studying. For example, many college students report that they spend considerable time reading a book many times before an examination. Some students are not aware that the practice of underlining (highlighting) words and phrases in textbooks and simply rereading are generally ineffective learning strategies, because they are relatively passive activities involving little thinking. It is possible to spend considerable time underlining or rereading a chapter and still not remember many of the important ideas presented. Reading and remembering are two different tasks. Unless students are actively involved in outlining, organizing, questioning themselves, and summarizing the material while they read, much of the time is wasted (Cortina, Elder, & Gonnet, 1992).

They Fail to Sustain Effective Learning and Motivational Strategies

Students usually take more exams and quizzes in high school. Therefore, if they score well on most of the evaluations but low on one or two, they can still maintain a high grade. In college, the situation is different. Fewer evaluations are given throughout the term. For example, a course may require a paper, two exams, and a final; each evaluation may involve 20% to 30% of the final grade. Students who want high grades cannot afford to let down during the semester.

Many students demonstrate the knowledge of how to learn and do well at times, but fail to attend class regularly, do not keep up with their assignments, and, in general, get behind in their work. Although these students have the potential for doing well, they cannot sustain their motivation and effort throughout the term. The end result is lower academic performance.

They Are Not Ready to Change Their Learning and Study Behavior

Some students are not convinced they need to change. After all, they got through high school and were able to get into college. These students often raise questions, publicly or privately: “Why do I need to change?” “I graduated from high school,” or “I was accepted to this college.” It is not until the first midterm exams that some students realize that many of the learning and study skills used in high school are insufficient for
academic success in college. The earlier students become aware of this fact, the quicker they can begin to make the necessary changes.

Although many students realize they need to improve, they tend to stick with familiar strategies, even though they are not achieving the best results. They simply are not motivated to change. Some students believe that it takes too much effort and time to learn new methods of learning. Learning to play a new song on the guitar or a new dance routine takes effort. Yet, because individuals enjoy the activity and gain special satisfaction from excelling in an area, they do not consider it work. When students use their effort and time more wisely and use more effective methods of learning, they find that the amount of effort and time does pay off in terms of higher grades, greater knowledge and confidence, and more time for fun.

HOW CAN I MANAGE MY ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR?

The following are six major components of academic self-management or self-regulation. Learning the self-management skills related to each of these components can help you exert control over your own learning and promote your own academic achievement (adapted from Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997):

- Motivation
- Methods of learning
- Use of time
- Physical environment
- Social environment
- Monitoring performance

Motivation

"Each semester I write down goals that I want to attain."

“When I feel down, I talk to myself to motivate me to keep on task.”

Although there are many different ways to define motivation, the approach taken in this book views motivation as the internal processes that give behavior its energy and direction. These internal processes include your goals, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations. For example, your persistence on a task is often related to how competent you believe you are to complete the task. Also, your beliefs about the causes of your successes and failures on present tasks influence your motivation and
behavior on future tasks. For example, students who attribute failure to lack of ability behave differently from students who attribute failure to lack of effort.

In chapter 3, you will learn that when you change your beliefs and perceptions, you change your motivation. During a presentation on self-motivation at a high school, a student asked one of the authors: “You mean that if you are bored, you can do something about it?” It was obvious that the student had not thought about the extent to which she had the ability to control her own motivation.

Think about the pilot of a 747 who wakes up in the morning knowing that she must fly a few hundred people from Los Angeles to New York, or the surgeon who must perform a delicate heart operation. The public is fortunate that these individuals know how to motivate themselves even when they do not feel like doing something. It would be alarming to hear a pilot say: “I don’t feel like flying today,” or a surgeon say: “Not another operation, I’m not in the mood.”

One of the major differences between successful and less successful individuals in any field or specialization is that successful individuals know how to motivate themselves even when they do not feel like performing a task, whereas less successful individuals have difficulty controlling their motivation. As a result, less successful individuals are less likely to complete a task, or more likely to quit or complete a task at a lower level of proficiency. Although successful learners may not feel like completing required tasks, they learn how to motivate themselves to completion to maintain progress toward achieving their goals.

Another issue is whether one has a problem in motivation or persistence. A student may be motivated to engage in a task but have difficulty persisting because he or she easily becomes distracted while engaging in the task (Kuhl & Beckman, 1985).

Think about your own behavior. Identify a situation in which followed-through, not motivation, was a problem. That is to say, you really wanted to complete a task, but you had difficulty persisting because you were easily distracted. Also, think about a situation in which you were successful in controlling your behavior in a potentially distracting situation. What self-management strategies do you use to maintain your persistence in a task?

To be a successful learner in college, students must be able to concentrate and deal with the many potential personal and environmental distractions that may interfere with learning and studying. Students use many different processes to control aspects of their behaviors. The following are examples of self-management processes:

- “When I am in the library and distracted by a conversation, I move to another table.”
• "When I start worrying on an exam, I immediately begin convincing myself that I can do well if I take my time."
• "When I start thinking that I don't have the ability to achieve, I remind myself that more effort is needed."

Dealing with distracting factors in learning is an important aspect of self-management, because it helps protect one's commitment to learn.

A number of important motivational self-management techniques can be used to develop and maintain these important beliefs. The first is goal setting. Educational research indicates that high achievers report using goal setting more frequently and more consistently than low achievers (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986). When individuals establish and attempt to attain personal goals, they are more attentive to instruction, expend greater effort, and increase their confidence when they see themselves making progress. It is difficult to be motivated to achieve without having specific goals.

A second motivational self-management technique is self-verbalization, or self-talk. This procedure takes many forms. For example, verbal reinforcement or praise can be used following desired behavior. You simply tell yourself things like: "Great! I did it!" or "I'm doing a great job concentrating on my readings!" Reinforce yourself either covertly (to yourself) or aloud. At first, you may think it sounds strange or silly to use self-verbalization. Once you get familiar with it, you will find that it works. Don't underestimate the power of language in self-control of motivation. World-class athletes have been trained to use verbal reinforcement for years.

More elaborate self-talk training programs are available to help individuals control anxiety, mood, and other emotional responses (e.g., Butler, 1981; Ottens, 1991). These programs are based on the belief that what one says to oneself is an important factor in determining attitudes, feelings, emotions, and behaviors. This speech or self-talk is the running dialogue inside our heads. Some of our speech motivates us to try new tasks and persist in difficult situations; other self-talk is unproductive and inhibits our motivation to succeed. The goal of these programs is to change negative self-talk to positive self-talk. Chapter 5 describes this process in more detail.

Another motivational self-management technique is arranging or imagining rewards or punishments for success or failure at an academic task. Students who control their motivation by giving themselves rewards and punishments outperform students who do not use this control technique (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986). What self-control strategies have you used in the past to control your motivation? The following are examples reported by our students: "If I study for 50 minutes, I'll allow myself to speak on the phone for 10 minutes"; or "If I work on my
term paper for an evening, I'll treat myself to a pizza”; or “If I find that I'm keeping up with my work, I'll go to a movie on a weeknight.”

In summary, to control your motivation, you need to set goals; develop positive beliefs about your ability to perform academic tasks; and maintain these beliefs while faced with the many disturbances, distractions, occasional failure experiences, and periodic interpersonal conflicts in your life. You will have difficulty managing your behavior if you do not have confidence in your ability to succeed. In turn, you develop confidence in your ability by learning how to use different learning and study strategies that lead to academic success.

Methods of Learning

“While reading my sociology textbook, I write important questions to answer after reading each main heading.”

“I use a time line to recall the dates of major battles in my history course.”

Another term for methods of learning is learning strategies. Learning strategies are the methods students use to acquire information. Higher achieving students use more learning strategies than do lower achieving students (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). Underlining, summarizing, and outlining are examples of learning strategies. You will learn in chapter 2 that different learning strategies serve different purposes.

Think about the large array of tools a plumber brings to each job. If he arrived at jobs with only a few wrenches or pliers, he would not be able to complete many jobs. Just as there are different tools for different jobs, there are different learning strategies for different academic tasks (Levin, 1986). Successful learners also need a large number of “tools” to make schoolwork easier and to increase the probability of their success. For example, knowing how to use maps or representations to organize information and generate and answer questions from notes and textbooks are important learning tools. Many students who have difficulty learning in school attribute their problem to a lack of ability when the problem actually may be that they have never been properly taught how to learn. Some students use one or two major learning strategies for all tasks in all courses. These students often do not have the necessary tools to learn the complex material they encounter in the courses they are required to take. For example, on exams, many instructors ask questions relating to topics that they did not directly discuss in lectures. Students must be able to organize and analyze notes so they are prepared to answer questions such as: “How does the government affect the allocation of resources through tax policy?” or “Why does the temperature of the water influence the velocity of sound?”
The plumbing example can be used to provide a practical example of understanding the relation between learning and motivation. The first author is going to admit something: He doesn’t have confidence in his ability to do many household chores. Therefore, he procrastinates, fails to purchase the tools that could help him complete tasks, and doesn’t pay much attention when friends try to explain how he can be a successful handyman. When his wife tells him that a water faucet is leaking and asks him to fix it, he often tells her to wait a few days—perhaps the leaking will stop! Even if he had the tools, he still might not attempt to complete the job himself.

You cannot become a successful learner merely by acquiring new learning and study skills. You also must deal with your motivation (i.e., beliefs and perceptions) regarding a task. Even if you know how to use an effective strategy, you may not be motivated to use it. Some educators (e.g., Paris, 1988) describe these two important components of learning as the skill (i.e., learning strategies) and will (i.e., the motivation to use strategies).

**Use of Time**

“I keep a weekly calendar of my activities.”

“I start studying at least 1 week before exams.”

Educators have found a relation between time management and academic achievement. Students with better time-management skills tend to have a higher grade-point average (GPA) than students with poorer time-management skills. In fact, Britton and Tesser (1991) found that time management skills measured in the freshman year were more predictive of GPAs in the senior year than were SAT scores.

Why does time management appear to be so important in determining academic success? One explanation is that use of time impacts self-management. If a student has difficulty dealing with time, he or she ends up doing what is most urgent when deciding which task to do first. If a paper is the next task that needs to be done, one works on the paper; if an exam is the next challenge, one studies for the exam. Little time is spent on any long-term planning to consider the importance of different tasks and how they can best be completed (Zimmerman, Bonner, & Kovach, 1996).

How many times have you heard individuals state: “I don’t have time.” The problem for most individuals is not that there is not enough time to accomplish what needs to be done, but that they do not know how to manage the amount of time that is available each day. When students analyze their use of time, they find a great deal of it is wasted.

A close friend of the first author is a manager at IBM. Each year he sends members of his sales force to time-management workshops. He
explained that effective use of time by his total sales force can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in increased sales. Many of his sales staff are experts in technology, have excellent interpersonal skills, and are highly motivated to succeed. The problem is that many of them do not know how to manage their time, and this deficiency prevents them from becoming more successful.

Physical and Social Environment

“I turn off the TV or stereo so I can concentrate on what I am doing.”

“I go to the library to study before exams”

“When I find that I don’t understand any material, I immediately make an appointment with my instructor.”

“I organize a study group before an examination.”

Another important aspect of self-management is the ability of learners to restructure their physical and social environments to meet their needs. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986) found that high achievers reported greater use of environmental restructuring and were more likely to seek help from others than were low-achieving students. For the most part, environmental restructuring refers to locating places to study that are quiet or not distracting. Although this task may not appear difficult to attain, it poses many problems for students who either select inappropriate environments initially or cannot control the distractions once they occur.

Self-management of the social environment relates to an individual’s ability to determine when he or she needs to work alone or with others, or when it is time to seek help from instructors, tutors, peers, or non-social resources (such as reference books). Knowing how and when to work with others is an important skill often not taught in school.

Educational research indicates that high-achieving students are more likely than low-achieving students to seek help from instructors, just the opposite of what one might expect (Newman & Schwager, 1992). Newman (1991) stated: “Seeking help from a knowledgeable other person is more beneficial than giving up prematurely, more appropriate, and waiting passively, and more efficient than persisting unsuccessfully on one’s own” (p. 154).

It would seem logical that everyone would want to use all available resources and seek assistance from teachers and peers. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Some students do not seek help because they do not want to appear “dumb” or incompetent in the eyes of their peers or fail
to seek help because of the extra effort it may entail. For example, in a class discussion, one of the students mentioned that she did not do well on a biology exam because she did not understand the instructor’s expectations of the response to the essay questions. The second author suggested that she meet with the instructor to discuss his expectations. She agreed that this would be a good strategy. However, the following week she stated that too many students were waiting to talk to the instructor, so she got frustrated and left. The second author’s response was that meeting with her instructor was a task that she had to accomplish. It was her responsibility to call for an appointment, wait to meet him after class, or at the beginning or end of the school day. If her success in the course depended on learning how to prepare and take his exams, then her job was to get to the instructor, one way or another.

Here is another example of the need to seek assistance. A student approached the first author at the end of the second lecture in the term and stated: “You’re not going to count my quiz today? I haven’t had an opportunity to buy my textbook.” The first author stated that the quiz would count and that the student had numerous opportunities to locate the required five pages of reading for the quiz. He could have read the material at the reserve section of the library, where numerous copies of the reading had been placed. He could have borrowed the reading from another student in the class or asked the first author if he had a copy to loan him. In other words, it was his responsibility to get the material.

Both of these interactions provide excellent examples of the importance of managing one’s learning. In both situations, the students failed to understand their responsibility in the learning process. Think about situations in your past where you would have benefited from managing some aspect of your physical or social environment.

**Monitoring Performance**

“I evaluate the results of each of my exams to determine how I can better prepare for future exams.”

“If I find that I don’t understand what I’m reading, I slow down and reread the material.”

The final factor that you can manage is your academic performance. Whether writing a paper, completing a test, or reading a book, you can learn how to use self-management processes to influence the quality of your performance. One of the important functions of a goal is to provide an opportunity for you to detect a discrepancy between it and your present performance. This analysis enables you to make corrections in the learning process. When you learn to monitor your work under different learning conditions (e.g., test taking and studying), you are able
to determine what changes are needed in your learning and studying behavior. It is interesting that successful students tend to be aware of how well they have done on a test even before getting it back from an instructor (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988).

World-class athletes are good examples of individuals who learn how to self-manage their performance. For example, competitive skiers often imagine themselves going through each slalom gate before making an actual run and concentrate on remaining relaxed during their run (Garfield, 1984). After each run, they observe and assess their performance (both from their perceptions and on videotape) to determine what modifications are needed to reach greater accuracy on the next run. They often use subvocal speech or self-talk to guide their behaviors and maintain attention to avoid distractions that may interfere with their performance.

When you learn how to monitor and control your own performance, you become your own coach or mentor. You can practice skills on your own, critique your own performance, and make the necessary changes to meet your goals at a high level of success.

THE SIX COMPONENTS OF ACADEMIC SELF-MANAGEMENT

The following example is how one student, Josh, exhibited self-management behavior in each of the components just discussed: Josh's goal was to join the debate team during the second term of his freshman year. He believed he could attain his goal by expending effort (motivation) in preparing for the tryouts. He first decided to study the topics that would dominate the debate season by reading magazine and newspaper articles (methods of learning). He then decided to practice his arguments with another friend (social environment) who also was interested in joining the team. They decided to reserve space at the speech clinic two evenings each week (time management) and use the available recording equipment (physical environment) to videotape their presentations and spend time critiquing themselves (monitoring performance).

Would Josh and his friend be successful if they failed to manage one or more factors influencing learning? Perhaps so, but we really do not know. For example, could they have been as successful practicing their arguments in their dorm rooms or whenever they found some time to meet, or without the recording machine? Could Josh have been as successful preparing by himself?

Although it is possible to self-manage behavior in all six of the areas discussed, not all students do so. A reasonable goal is to manage as much of one's behavior and thoughts as possible. In the example discussed, Josh and his friend believed they would be better prepared to
make the debate team following their plan of action. If you were in the same situation, you may have approached the task differently.

Remember the example we provided earlier in the chapter about Robert's study behavior for his history exam? Return to the description of his learning and studying behavior and identify how he managed each of the following factors: motivation, methods of learning, use of time, physical environment, social environment, and monitoring performance.

Throughout this book, you will be asked to set goals and develop a plan of action to attain them. During this process, you will learn how to manage different aspects of your academic learning that will affect your level of success. In each chapter, we provide examples of students' perceptions or beliefs about the learning strategies discussed in this textbook. These perceptions or student reflections, as we call them, are from students who have taken our course in learning strategies. As you read each reflection, think about your own perceptions, beliefs, or behavior related to the topic or issue. The following reflection illustrates how learning to manage one's academic behavior also can influence other aspects of one's life.

### Student Reflections

I first thought that self-management was confined to academic learning. Now I see that it is also a great tool for life in general. As I learn more about self-management and practice the related skills, I find that I'm much more organized. Most important, I'm getting my work done instead of putting it off and procrastinating, as I have always done. As the class has progressed, it has affected my daily life. I'm starting to see that my life outside of school is starting to run more smoothly as well.

I was always an incredibly unorganized person. I would throw all my stuff (from mail, schoolwork, even clothes) everywhere. I always was looking for things, losing things, and making a mess. Now I'm much more organized. I put things back when I'm finished with them, I keep my mail and outside school material in certain areas where I can find things, and my roommate is especially pleased, because I keep the room clean now. I'm also more prepared for whatever I have to do. I stick to schedules and plan for the events in my life. Basically, my life is more enjoyable! I'm happy now because of my continuing success at school, and this success has translated to my day-to-day life.
EXERCISE 1.1: SELF-ObservATION: ASSESSING YOUR SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Directions: Rate the extent to which you generally manage or control the factors influencing your learning by checking Always, Sometimes, or Never in the corresponding box and be prepared to offer a short explanation of your ratings. What areas are your strengths and weaknesses? Explain why you rated each dimension as you did.

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<td>Use of Time (e.g., “I plan how I use my time”)</td>
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<td>Methods of Learning (e.g., “I use different study methods for different types of assignments and tests”)</td>
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<td>Monitoring Performance (e.g., “I evaluate my work to determine my progress toward meeting personal and academic goals”)</td>
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Comments

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FIGURE 1.1 A process for self-management of academic behavior (adapted from Zimmerman et al., 1996).

HOW CAN I CHANGE MY BEHAVIOR?

Zimmerman et al. (1996) suggested a process that students can use to develop the self-management skills necessary for academic success (see Figure 1.1). This process will help you develop control over the six components of motivation and behavior identified in the previous section. Self-management involves the four interrelated processes defined here:

Self-observation and evaluation occur when students judge their personal effectiveness, often from observations and recordings of prior performances and outcomes.

Each semester, students come into the office to discuss a poor performance on an examination. They tell us they were prepared for the examination because they read each chapter two or three times. Obviously, these students have not learned to check their understanding. Baker (1989) referred to this situation as the illusion of knowing. Students often think they understand but do not test themselves to confirm or deny their belief. This lack of understanding is one of the reasons why many students are so confident of their performance during the first few weeks of college. They do not know they are in trouble. They wait for an examination for feedback, and then learn they don’t know the material.

Think about a science or mathematics examination you have taken. How often have you memorized formulas, but could not solve new problems because you did not understand the basic principles involved? You may have convinced yourself that you understood the material before the examination, but you really did not.
One problem is that some students study and prepare for examinations in the same way that they did in high school. They have yet to realize the differences in the two academic environments. In high school, teachers take most of the responsibility for their students' level of comprehension. High school teachers actively monitor the degree to which content is understood: They constantly quiz students, ask questions as they present new material, and place key ideas on the board. In contrast, college instructors expect students to do their own monitoring of their understanding. Therefore, problems arise early during the first college term if students do not know how to monitor their own understanding. An important part of becoming a more successful student is developing the ability to monitor one's knowledge and recognize when something is not understood.

Think about expert performers in a variety of fields. In sports, elite athletes begin observing their performances by viewing videotapes. After a short period of time, they are able to modify their performances from the feelings and feedback they obtain by viewing their own physical movements; dance studios place handrails next to mirrors to enable students to self-observe as they practice their routines; musicians learn to listen to their playing to critique their own performances (Glaser, 1996).

Behavior cannot be managed unless you are aware of it. Therefore, you will be asked throughout this book to observe and evaluate your current learning and study methods to determine those that are ineffective so they can be replaced by better methods. Most important, you need to become aware of when and how these new learning and study methods improve your learning.

Each semester we ask students to assess their use of time for a week. They usually are surprised to learn how much time they waste. They appear more motivated to change their time management after they have monitored and observed their use of time. Self-observation is an important first step in motivating students to consider changing their learning and study behaviors.

Goal setting and strategic planning occur when students analyze the learning task, set specific goals, and plan or refine the strategy to attain the goal (Zimmerman et al., 1996, p. 11).

This second step is important in all academic tasks, including writing a paper. When given the task of writing a paper, you should start by analyzing your strengths and weaknesses. Then analyze the assignment to determine the nature of the paper and what needs to be done. Next you should establish a goal for completion, with a number of intermediate or subgoals (e.g., locating necessary references and proofreading) for completing different sections of the paper. Finally, you should
develop a strategy for completing each of the intermediate goals. We
discuss this process in more detail in chapter 4.

The same procedure can be used in test preparation. After analyzing
previous tests as well as your present knowledge of the content (using
self-observation and evaluation), you should determine what course
material will be examined, establish goals for preparing for the exam,
determine how you will study (i.e., what strategies will be used), and,
finally, plan a time-management program consistent with your goals.

After you better understand your current behavior (through self-
observation and evaluation), you will be in a better position to determine
what needs to be accomplished (goals) and to develop a strategy to do it.
Much of the content in this book focuses on this step in the cycle.

*Strategy-implementation* and monitoring occurs when stu-
dents try to execute a strategy in structured contexts and to
monitor their accuracy in implementing it.

The third step in the cycle focuses on the effectiveness of your learn-
ing strategy. Is the strategy working? Are you attaining each of your
goals in completing your paper? Are you learning the necessary content
for your exam? If your strategy is working, keep going. If not, you had
better consider what needs to be done to change your behavior.

When you learn anything new, there is a tendency to revert back
to familiar methods (even though they may be less successful). This
happens to athletes, dancers, and students. Therefore, performers and
learners need to monitor their behaviors closely to determine whether
they are applying new strategies appropriately. The result of this moni-
toring may indicate a need to adjust the learning strategy to improve
progress toward the attainment of your goal. You may even decide that
it is time to seek help.

When an individual realizes that he or she does not understand a portion
of the text, he or she rereads the difficult section, slows the reading pace
through difficult or unfamiliar material, reviews course material that was
not understood, or skips certain questions on an examination, returning
to them after easier questions are answered. It is important that students
learn how to modify their study behavior to improve their understanding.

All students need to learn “fix-up” strategies to remedy learning
problems. That is, they need to learn what to do after they find that
they do not understand certain content. Often, different methods or
strategies for learning must be undertaken (e.g., asking and answering
questions) instead of continuing with the same ineffective strategy (e.g.,
underlining the content in a textbook).
Strategic-outcome monitoring occurs when students focus their attention on links between learning outcomes and strategic processes to determine effectiveness (p. 11).

The final stage in the cycle involves expanding your monitoring to include performance outcomes. The following questions must be answered: “Did the learning plan or strategy help me attain my goal?” “Did I have to make changes in my learning and study methods?” For example, you may have developed a strategy for studying for an objective test for the first examination of the term. You used the same strategy for a second examination, an essay test. Was the study strategy effective for both tests?

The cycle keeps going as self-observation is used to evaluate your exam performance by determining what questions you missed and the location of the information (i.e., notes or readings). A self-directed learner is constantly monitoring learning outcomes to determine whether different strategies are needed to attain goals and maintain a high level of academic success.

When researchers study expert performance in such fields as music, sports, medicine, chess, and reading, they find a common element in their learning. Initially, experts depend on instruction from others, and with time, they increasingly rely on their self-observation and self-judgments about their behavior. The ability to self-manage enables experts to profit a great deal from practice and study by themselves without assistance from their coaches and teachers (Glaser, 1996).

Zimmerman et al. (1996) believe that one of the major advantages of using the self-management process is that it can improve not only one’s learning, but it can enhance one’s perception of self-confidence and control over the learning process. By learning to self-observe your current learning and study behavior, and by determining for yourself what methods are effective and ineffective, you can begin replacing ineffective methods with better ones and can become more aware of the improved effectiveness of these new strategies. This process helps you to become a more self-directed or self-regulated learner.

The first exercise in the Follow-up Activities section of this book, beginning with chapter 5, identifies a topic and questions related to each of the four processes just discussed to change or modify your behavior. These questions provide the structure for conducting your own self-management study. Take a moment to look at the self-management study at the end of chapter 5, focusing on reducing anxiety.

Appendix A provides detailed procedures for how to conduct such a study. You will learn in Appendix A how to identify a problem, observe your behavior, and develop a plan to improve and evaluate your academic learning. Read Appendix A as soon as possible. Appendix B pro-
vides three examples of such studies. You will find an evaluation of each self-study at the end of each report. Your instructor will provide specific directions about conducting such a study.

You may want to conduct a self-management study to improve your time management, study environment, test preparation, motivation, or any other study-related skill. Read ahead in the textbook if you wish to conduct a study on a topic that will be discussed later in the term.

HOW DOES SELF-MANAGEMENT OCCUR IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT?

Figure 1.2 is useful for understanding the organization of the remaining chapters in this book. Although all the components of self-management interact, it is easier in a textbook to present content in a linear fashion. Therefore, we have grouped the components into three different units. The self-management cycle can help you gain competence in each of the areas identified.

There are four key skills that must be mastered to perform successfully in any academic setting: learning from text, learning from lectures, preparing for exams, and taking exams. Writing, another important skill, is discussed under learning how to respond to essay exams.

The main factor influencing the effectiveness of your learning these skills is your ability to manage the various elements of your behavior. We group goal setting and management of emotion and effort under motivational strategies, and time management and management of physical and social environment under behavioral strategies. It is important to note that behavioral and motivational self-control are interrelated. The
academic performance box in Figure 1.2 represents the performance dimension aspect of self-management.

The process we described here places a great deal of responsibility on you, the learner. We wish there were an easy way to become a more successful learner. Unfortunately, we do not know any other way. Educational research clearly indicates that students who take charge of their own learning are more likely to achieve at a higher level than students who fail to take this responsibility (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994).

In each chapter, you will acquire important strategies to assist in managing your learning behavior. For each strategy discussed, you will learn why it is important, when it can be used, and how it can be implemented. The key to success in this course is practicing the different strategies so they become automatic. As you practice, you will be able to learn more material in less time than you did prior to using these new strategies. In other words, you will learn to study smarter, not harder.

You are not alone on your journey to become a more successful student. Your instructor and peers will provide support and encouragement. You will be asked to complete various individual and group exercises and assignments as you read this book. You will find that working collaboratively with peers and giving and receiving feedback will be a valuable experience throughout the course.

Finally, you will only be taught strategies that thousands of students have found useful in learning academic material. After learning and practicing a strategy, only you will decide whether it is worth the effort and time to use it regularly in school. If the strategy proves useful, you will use it. Likewise, if you do not find the strategy helpful, you will modify it or disregard it. Try each new strategy before you reach any conclusions. Do not make the mistake of rejecting something new before you have the opportunity to see how it works.

Successful learners use specific beliefs and processes to motivate and control their own behavior.

Some students fail to recognize the differences between high school and college learning during the first weeks in college.

Students can self-manage six key components of academic learning that can influence their achievement level: motivation, methods of learning (i.e., learning strategies), use of time, physical environment, and monitoring performance.

The self-management cycle involves four interrelated processes: strategy identification, goal setting and strategic planning, strategy implementation monitoring, and strategic-outcome evaluation. We notice it to our advantage.
5. An important part of becoming a more successful student is developing the ability to monitor knowledge, recognize when something is not understood, and do something about it.

Follow-Up Activities

1. Analyze Your Beliefs About Learning and Motivation

Read each of the following statements and place the corresponding letter or letters whether you agree (A), disagree (D), or are not sure (NS) about the accuracy of each statement. After identifying your beliefs, think about how they influence your motivation and learning. Discuss your ratings with other students in your class.

_1. “I can’t do well in a course if I’m not interested in the content.”
_2. “I will not learn much if I am bored in class.”
_3. “Competition is a great motivator.”
_4. “Human intelligence is fixed by the time a student begins school.”
_5. “Sometimes there is not enough time in the day to do everything that needs to be done.”
_6. “If I simply listen in class and read my assignments, I should do well in college.”
_7. “The most important aspect of studying is finding enough time.”
_8. “The key to success in college is having good instructors.”
_9. “Procrastination is a personality trait that can't be changed.”

2. Analyze the Meaning of Two Statements

An educational researcher has stated that self-directed individuals believe that “learning is not something that happens to students; it is something that happens by students” (Zimmerman, 1989, p. 22). What do you think this statement means? What implications does it have for improving one’s learning?

How does the following statement relate to your own learning experiences?

Part of being a good student is learning to be aware of the state of one’s own mind and the degree of one’s own understanding. The good student may be one who often says that he does not understand, simply because he keeps a constant check on his understanding. The poor student, who does not, so to speak, watch himself trying to understand does
not know most of the time whether he understands or not. Thus, the problem is not to get students to ask us what they don’t know; the problem is to make them aware of the difference between what they know and what they don’t (Holt, 1982, p. 17).

3. Analyze Course Demands

You learned in this chapter that a successful student takes charge of his or her own learning. Therefore, it is important to understand the demands of each of the courses you are taking this term. In this way, you can set goals and develop a plan for achieving them. Use the summary sheet provided to analyze the syllabus, textbooks, and professor in each course. Write comments in abbreviated form so you can discuss them in class.

- Review each syllabus and identify major assignments and demands during the semester (e.g., papers, projects, weekly papers, etc.).
- Analyze each textbook to determine what learning aids are included (i.e., glossary, questions, summaries, objectives, or test questions), that help you comprehend the material. Also, identify any other characteristics of the books that make them easy or hard to read (e.g., bold headings, graphics, small type).
- Analyze the instructor’s teaching style to determine whether it will make it easy or hard to take good notes. What do you like most and least about his or her style? How does she or he let you know what is important? What note-taking problems do you encounter? Identify any of the following characteristics about your instructor: speaks rapidly, speaks slowly, speaks loudly, speaks softly, does or does not use board or overheads, is well organized or is disorganized, and so forth.

What are your general impressions of the instructor and course? Identify your interest level and expectancy for success in the course. Identify any concerns you may have about doing well in a course and the steps you can take to deal with your concerns.
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<td>General Comments</td>
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