



## What kind of student are you really? (No cheating!)

*You probably know many kinds of students. Some really know what they are doing. Others do not. Still others are putting on a good show, but when the going gets tough, they lack the concentration and the determination to keep going. Here's a chance for you to think about yourself as a student. In this chapter, you'll meet three types of students. Which one are you?*

If you are reading this guidebook, you're already serious — or you're getting serious — about your education. That's already a major step. You're realizing how important your education is to your life, and you're starting to think about *where you want it to take you*. One place is college. **Getting there *and succeeding there*: both are serious business.**

How serious do you need to be? Well, "serious" doesn't mean you suddenly lose the fun in your life or become a different person. It means you take control of your days so you can do everything you *need* and *want to do*. It means becoming an independent and capable student who improves day by day.

### **Serious students are going places**

Students are people who are supposed to learn and get the highest grades they can. Each day, your grades on tests and assignments determine your final grades. **Your final grades help determine your future.**

- Will you get into the college that's right for you?
- Will you get into that interesting or challenging college program?
- Will you get into a college that leads to the career path you want?

The plain fact is that what you do every day as a student (listening carefully in class, following directions, completing assignments, meeting deadlines, studying with concentration, and earning good grades) has really far-reaching effects. That's why getting serious is so important.

Plus, if you think about it, what you do now, as a student, mirrors what you will do as an adult: going off to work each day, doing a job according to someone's directions, meeting the demands of others, and trying to succeed by using your mind. School is like a job where you are paid in grades and knowledge.

The demands of school also teach you *to become a productive person*. All those assignments, tests, projects, lab reports, and papers teach you how to get things done. Productive people are always in high demand: Colleges are eager to accept productive students, and, later, employers are eager to offer them jobs. Your grades are important, but as a student, grades are only one measure of your productivity.

Look around you at other students in school. Then ask yourself, “*Who will be successful in life? Who won't?*” Why do you put some students in the “successful” category but not others? You can tell by their everyday actions: Those students who are serious about their education get things done and are going somewhere. They're moving ahead. They're better organized, and they are more successful at what they try.

What about you? What will your friends say when they are asked if *you* will be successful? Your friends will judge your seriousness of purpose, not how much fun you are. Successful students are in control of themselves. They get things done: from day to day, from semester to semester, and from year to year. They're focused and *balanced* (which means they still have fun). They envision a successful and exciting life for themselves. They plan ahead. They set and reach goals because they're going places.

This guidebook gives you Strategies do all of these things — to succeed now and in the future.

## The Strategies really work

For more than 25 years, I have advised and counseled all kinds of college students. The Strategies in this guidebook come from my experience talking and working with thousands of students —

- Students trying to keep on track
- Students struggling with grades
- Students trying to climb out of deep academic holes
- Students with great ambitions
- Students who couldn't get a handle on their ambitions
- Students who were overwhelmed but who were trying hard to succeed

As you go through this guidebook, you may find that you already have some Strategies under control. That's great. Often, just knowing that you are doing the right thing can be reassuring. However, other Strategies may be new to you. Still others, you might not take too seriously until you read through them and understand their importance.

All the Strategies are important. Practicing and perfecting them in high school will put you in control of your life and your courses. And when you get to college, the Strategies will make you successful, less stressed, more confident, and focused. Most importantly, because you've mastered using the Strategies, you'll be among those students who graduate *on time*.

## Want to be rich and famous?

Lots of teens do. Certainly, these are high goals. But if you asked these teens *how* they are going to achieve this fame and fortune, you may find their "strategies" more than a bit vague.

Let's return to our mountain-climbing analogy for a moment. If you're a student who is serious about succeeding, you need to look at the entire mountain. You should be thinking about reaching the peak and enjoying the view from the top. But some climbers only watch the path that's right in front of them or the rock that they are crawling over at that moment. To figure out what kind of climber/student you are, put a checkmark next to the section below that best describes your attitude toward your classes. Be honest! For now, don't worry about the three labels. You need to know who you are *at this moment*. You can always change.

**Clueless Student.** If you are a Clueless Student, school is something to "get through" and "leave behind." You find school dull. You're waiting for the excitement to begin, but it never seems to arrive. You think of your education in terms of compartments. You move from one course to the next, one semester to the next, one year to the next, until you've finished another phase of your education. Then you move on to the next phase, expecting it to be just like the last.

You don't really exert yourself. Nor do you look too far ahead — the future is not something you think about. Your goal is to work just enough to get an "okay" grade but not to do more work than you have to. Mostly, you're content with getting by, and sometimes that means getting a pretty good grade for doing only a satisfactory job. Getting an occasional bad grade is okay with you. Reaching for a long-term goal is not something you think about. You're willing to trust to luck or fate that things will work out.

**Typical Student.** If you are a Typical Student, you work harder than a Clueless Student. You put forth effort — but only when you want to. You study for tests and complete assignments, but then you often draw a line: You don't work at courses that you don't like or that you find too hard or too boring. In general, you earn high grades, but basically, you work for grades, not knowledge. You have no real sense of how all of your courses fit together. There's no BIG picture for you. What's more, like a Clueless Student, you don't think about how high school classes prepare you for college and what you might do in life.

Most college-bound high school students belong to this group. The number of great or good grades earned by these students changes from semester to semester, depending on how many courses they “like.” Unfortunately, Typical Students never achieve great success because when courses get too tough, these students back off and settle for a “whatever” grade, satisfied that they’ve given their courses “a good shot.”

❑ **College Smart Student.** If you are a College Smart Student, you are a serious student. You understand that your education is more than something to “get through” and “leave behind.” That distinguishes you from a Clueless Student right away. And unlike a Typical Student, you work for *all* of your courses.

You get high grades, but you know that **grades are not the real goal. There’s a larger purpose:** *filling your knowledge bank, developing learning skills, and achieving certain academic goals.* You are looking beyond classes, semesters, and grades. You’re trying to figure out *where this education is going to take you.* Even though your life goals may be a bit hazy and change over time, you’re still always thinking ahead. For example, you might say to yourself: *I like math. I wonder if I would like engineering or business. I like language and literature. I wonder if I would make a good lawyer.* You’re beginning to understand how academic success actually creates many opportunities for your life. You are continually working with possible goals in mind, thinking about the future. A College Smart Student has the maturity to see the BIG picture.

### **What is the BIG picture?**

- Every course you take develops your mind in a different way.
- Courses relate to each other. They merge to form a whole. An education is *not* lots of little compartments, separate courses, or separate semesters.
- Neglecting one academic area for another shortchanges you.
- Knowledge brings opportunities in college and the world.
- Initiative and planning are needed to get through the challenges that arise in high school *and* the greater challenges of college.

### **Use this guidebook — tuck it in your backpack.**

To achieve success, you must be a college smart student. You become this student by using the Strategies in this guidebook.

As you get better at using these Strategies, you will believe that anything is possible — you can reach any goal, carry out any plan, and fulfill any ambition. You’ll find that your courses become more interesting, even exciting. You can achieve high grades and feel the confidence that comes with great personal success, the result of your good effort. But even more exciting is the idea that you are beginning to make a life for yourself. When you graduate from high school, you’ll be prepared to choose the right college, then the right area of study, and, eventually, the right career.

You'll know, how to use your mind and energy to take control of not only your days and education but also your future.

All three types of college-bound students described in this chapter graduate from high school. They get into college. But getting into college is one thing. Succeeding in college is much harder. However, if you are a college smart student, you've developed knowledge and learning skills that will open many college opportunities to you. With your strong background, you'll be able to take all kinds of college courses, and each one will be more interesting, satisfying, and exciting than the last *because you have developed the maturity, knowledge, and vision to succeed.*

And that last thought is very important. **YOU'RE THE ONE** who has to make choices about your life and your education. Which student are you? Which student do you want to be?

**PSST!** Now that you know about the three kinds of students and how the BIG picture works, review the highlights — so you really see how all those ideas fit together. You have some decisions to make, and the decision you make now will seriously affect your success in college and in life. Make good ones, and you're on your way!

**PSST!**