

COLLEGE SMART[®]



*Be Ready, Graduate On Time,
and Save Everyone Lots of Money!*

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LEARN MORE ABOUT LEARNING

Okay. Use three words to complete this phrase: My mind is like a _____:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When I ask students to do this, the words students usually give me tend to fit into two categories.

GROUP A	GROUP B
Box	Computer
Suitcase	Tree
Closet	Engine

Do you see that one group thinks of their minds simply as containers? The other group sees their minds in a more complex way, working and dynamic, and in the case of the tree: a growing thing. You want to be in Group B.

Group A students. They have container words for their minds. They think learning is something that just happens to them. If they sit in class, the teacher will pour the information into a hole in their head. No sweat.

Group B students. College Smart Students, on the other hand, think of their minds as processors, working instruments, busy centers that transport information, living things that grow, or use energy to produce results. These students know that learning takes time and organization. They know what their job is, and they get it done. And that's because they know how their mind really works. For these students, being in school is active, exciting, and rewarding.

LEARNING TAKES ENERGY. LEARNING IS ACTIVE.

Walk into a classroom, sit down, and class begins. The teacher says, “*Today we’re going to begin studying the US Constitution*” or “*Today we’ll learn how to calculate the molecular weight of a chemical compound.*”

Processing minds learn in layers. Let’s look at these layers of learning.

- **Layer 1:** Before you step into the classroom, you’re already familiar with the class material because you’ve read ahead.
- **Layer 2:** The teacher is really *reviewing* for you what you’ve already read, so the class means more to you. You focus on the teacher’s words, stay on-task, and take meaningful notes.
- **Layer 3:** You can follow what the teacher is saying — it’s not completely new. You’re also able to take better notes because you have background on the topic. You may find you develop your own system of quick writing. (If you’re not yet a good note-taker and can’t keep up with the teacher, ask if you can record the class. Always ask permission.)
- **Layer 4:** You’re ready to ask good questions. You can contribute to class discussions.
- **Layer 5:** Later, when you sit down to study and rewrite your class notes, you’re reviewing what you’ve learned — strengthening your knowledge even more. Everything begins falling into place and making sense. Plus, this isn’t the last time you go over this material. You do it frequently during the time you’re studying it.

You’re gaining knowledge layer by layer. Layered knowledge stays with you. It “lasts.” And it all begins with working ahead of the next class.

CONTAINER-HEADS JUST SIT THERE WAITING TO BE FILLED.

If you’re a container-head, you don’t work ahead in class. You walk into class with a mind that’s blank. You may find it hard to keep up with what the teacher is saying. You don’t have any questions to ask, so you don’t contribute to class. Maybe your mind wanders.

**LISTEN TO DR. BOB****Why you need to practice this Strategy for College**

If you are used to getting most of your knowledge during class, you'll be out of luck in college. Start now to practice learning on your own. Earning high grades in college is much, much tougher than you've ever experienced. The majority of college students learn this the hard way. They expect college to be the same-old, same-old. They couldn't be more wrong.

You're about to meet Andrea. This is the first in a number of stories that will show college students in typical real-life situations. These are not stories that happen occasionally. I chose these stories because they are situations that are happening right now all over the country. Andrea represents thousands of students in her predicament.

After talking to students one-on-one for 25 years, I became an expert on the problems that defeat college students. That's why I wrote this book. I'm using my insights to help you avoid these mistakes. The 12 Strategies will guide you.

**UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL*****Andrea: The Earlier the Better***

Andrea was clearly unhappy, discouraged, and depressed. I talked with her after a clearly disastrous first semester in college. Her GPA was bad news even though she had graduated with honors from a good high school.

The first thing I discovered about her was that she didn't spend nearly enough time studying. She agreed, "*Okay, more time studying.*"

At the end of the second semester, she saw me again. Her grades hadn't gone up very much at all. "What do I do now? What am I doing wrong?" she asked. With her grades, she was hanging on by her finger nails.

She was afraid to go home for the summer to face her parents.

“What if I get kicked out of college? What if I have to go back home for good? Mom will go bonkers. My dad will give me pamphlets about joining the army. Green is just not my color, and I’ve never gotten up ‘at dawn’ in my life.”

When she returned to the start of her sophomore she had new determination. We agreed that she needed to look at college study from all angles. Andrea knew she had to make some big changes.

Dr. Bob: Okay, you’ve been studying more; you went from 10 hours a week to 20. This semester you want to be up to 25-30.

Andrea: That’s like a full-time job!

Dr. Bob: Now let’s look at HOW you study.

She took a notebook out of her backpack.

Dr. Bob: Where do you study?

Andrea: In my dorm room.

Dr. Bob: That’s too distracting. Find new study places.

Andrea: Where?

Dr. Bob: “How about the library? Lots of quiet, out-of-the way corners there. Dorms have study rooms; and I know the Union has study areas. But find a quiet one, not a social one.

Andrea: Right. In fact, the dorm next to mine has a basement study area.

She was taking lots of notes.

Dr. Bob: Andrea, when do you study?”

Andrea: All the time.

Dr. Bob: No you don’t. Do you study at 3:00 a.m.?

Andrea: Sometimes — especially if I have a test the next day.

I put my head in my hands.

Andrea: Did I say something wrong? Do you have a headache, Dr. Neuman?

Dr. Bob: No, but I'm on the way to one. Andrea, now take some very careful notes for yourself.

#1: I'm going to get out of dorm room. It's too distracting.

#2: I'll make a daily and weekly **Map**, AND STICK TO IT.

#3 I'll will increase my study time to 30 hours each week, studying regularly for each course and keeping up with them all.

#4 I will take time to eat and sleep.

#5 When I follow a map without turning my days upside down, I'll be studying better.

#6 Studying is like playing an instrument – the more I practice, the better I'll get.

Andrea: Maybe I can learn to play the banjo! That was just a little joke, Dr. Neuman. You're supposed to laugh.

Dr. Neuman: Hah!

Andrea: I get it, I get it! Studying is a process, and unless I find the steps to the process, I'll just stay stuck in neutral, and my grades will stay the same.

Dr. Bob: No. In fact, if you stay in neutral they'll probably go down because your courses are getting harder.

I had hardly finished my sentence and Andrea was up from her chair, backpack on her shoulder, and shaking my hand. "*Dr. Neuman, I'm going to do it!*"

And do it she did. The next semester she showed me her grades. She had them enlarged to poster size at a print shop on campus, and she now could look at them on her dorm wall. Every day they reminded her that she was moving in the right direction.

At the time I talked with Andrea, I hadn't yet written my book, but she, and thousands like her, let me see where and how real-life students need help with all kinds of problems. The 12 Strategies grew out of our work together during these conferences. The Strategies are the real-deal. That's why you're reading this book right now.

Andrea didn't become a **straight-A** student right away, but after two more semesters, she was on a roll. By her senior year, her grade point average was 3.50. She became a **College Smart Student**, maybe a little late, but she did it. Graduation was a real celebration! Her dad and mom were ecstatic. And the US Army just had to get along without her!



DEAN'S COMMENTARY

Andrea is like too many students who think that they can approach college work casually with an *"It'll-all-work-out"* attitude. Nothing happens that way. Andrea needed very practical and specific advice on how to become a **College Smart Student**. In the end, it all worked out for her. She took control, set goals for herself, and felt great for her efforts.

Remember the learning mountain? Always aim for the top. As you move higher, the work gets harder. You need to meet each challenge by studying not only more, but studying better. That's exactly why your ability to learn *has to* grow from class to class and year to year. Always be asking yourself, "How can I be a better student?" There's always more to learn, and that's what all my Strategies are about.