

STUDY SMART, STUDY LESS

- Earn Better Grades and Higher Test Scores
- Learn Study Habits that Get Fast Results
- Discover Your Study Persona

ANNE CROSSMAN

author of *Getting the Best Out of College*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS KALB

Praise for Anne Crossman and *Study Smart, Study Less*

“Calling all teenagers (and their exasperated parents)! If you’ve been putting off calling Procrastinators Anonymous to find study strategies that work for you, this is the book for you. If you spend hours ‘studying’ without seeing your grades improve, this is the book for you. If you are starting to realize that acting too cool for school isn’t cool at all, this is the book for you. In short, if you are a teenager who wants to do better in school while gaining a sense of self (and maybe even a social life) this is the book for you.”

—Ginger Fay, President, Fay College Counseling, LLC

“Anne Crossman demystifies studying, proving that academic success isn’t magic. . . . Her book is accessible and helpful for ALL students, particularly those transitioning to high school. Parents, teachers, and counselors who want to help their kids succeed would also do well to read it.”

—Brian Cooper, Director of Educational Programs,
Duke University Talent Identification Program

“As a school counselor and former college admissions director, I have run across many smart students who were not successful because they didn’t know how to study. *Study Smart, Study Less* is custom made for these kids. What makes this book different is that it helps students identify their study style and teaches them how to maximize their strengths. Anne Crossman has given new hope to students who want to improve their study skills and boost their academic performance.”

—Gordon E. Stanley, PhD, Director of Counseling, Marist School

Josiah, Isaiah, and Evelyn
may you excel in all that your hearts desire

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PREFACE:

Study Is Not a Four-Letter Word

Chances have it that if you're trying to learn how to improve your study habits it's because you have studying to do, which means **you probably don't have oodles of time to read massive books about how to study . . . which is why we're here.**

Somewhere between junior high and college, teachers expect that you will have magically learned how to study. I have no idea where they get *that* idea since few schools actually offer courses in how to take notes, and, to be fair, most teachers have more material to teach than they do time. As a result, study skills rarely work into the lesson plan, leaving you without the skills you need to reach your academic potential . . . which is why we're here.

There are some who would swear *study* is a four-letter word. Just the threat of it calls up nightmares about maelstroms of papers to write, monuments of charts to fill, and galaxies of numbers to crunch—all due tomorrow. It's enough to make anyone procrastinate or die a premature, stress-related death . . . which is why we're here.

Studying is all about pacing. It's about studying your brains out without losing your mind. Or, to put it differently, it's about studying to your brain's fullest potential using techniques that are actually easy for you, making you smart while keeping you sane. **So, in an effort to make you as *smart* as possible in a way that is as *painless* as possible in as *little time* as possible, I have written this zesty little guide to get you started on what will hopefully become a lifetime of studiousness and success.** Which, in the end, is why we are here.

Maniacs, Brainiacs, Geeks, and Slackers

1

Identifying your study persona

We all wish studying were something we could do in our sleep, or that plugging a computer chip into our brains would do the trick. I hate to be the one to break it to you, but here it goes—success requires work. I know that’s just an awful thing to say, but **becoming a successful student requires a lot of sweat, sacrifice, and diligence. No great shocker there.** However, that doesn’t mean work can’t be fun. With the right outlook, tools, and expectations, you might be surprised how enjoyable academic success can be.

Very few people are naturally organized or get good grades without trying—and the few who are true natural geniuses in contrast have to work harder at things that seem normal to the rest of us. Everyone has different talents. As we work through this book, I intend to help you discover your learning strengths so that you will not only know how to make the most of them, but will also feel more confident as you tackle areas where you may not be as strong.

Wanting to do well but not knowing how is enough to drive anyone batty. Like the title of this chapter alludes, if we’re truly honest with ourselves we will admit that we all have a little bit of slacker in us. I mean,

let's be real. . . . Who is genuinely 100 percent thrilled to work? That said, work is one of those unavoidable realities, and when it comes our way it turns some of us into maniacs, some of us into geeks, and a lucky few into pumpkins—I mean, brainiacs. Fortunately for you, you are reading this book and are, therefore, well on your way to the latter.

Before we can begin to maximize your strengths (that's the next chapter), we need to first identify your study persona. The whole reason you're reading this book is because you think you could be doing better in class than you currently are. As a former high school English teacher I can tell you that, when faced with work, students tend to veer toward one of the four following study personas. Understanding which one you resemble most will help you pinpoint your study needs better. So, read on and mark the one that fits you best (we're going for the most similarities here).

THE UNPERFECTED PERFECTIONIST: You try really hard, you pull all-nighters, and you get nowhere. How frustrating. **You seem to be doing everything right (and sometimes you have the grades to show you're trying), but the end result isn't meeting your expectations.** Maybe the grade wasn't high enough. Or, you can't seem to remember what you studied so hard to learn earlier in the quarter when it comes time to take the final. Either way, you're wishing you could throw in the towel because your hard work is just not paying off.

THE DEADLINE DAREDEVIL: You think you work better under pressure and insist on waiting until the night before the deadline to start your project, hoping all your lucky stars will align and the printer won't go on strike. It seems like a good plan. After all, when have adrenaline

and sheer terror not been good motivators? Still, you find yourself having to repeat the cram session all over again when it comes time for the midterm, and then again for the final. And, when you tried to impress that good-looking someone last week with your knowledge of the Han Dynasty, you drew a blank. For the short term your plan seems to be working. But **some days it feels like all you're doing is putting out one deadline fire after another, which is causing you to sprout gray hairs prematurely.**

THE MACK SLACKER: You have perfected your art of doing nothing and doing it well. When it comes time to see the scores, you are the only one who really knows what you're getting and you put on a fairly convincing show that you don't really care. Classmates seem to love you for the fact that you don't study, don't pass, and don't care. But—though you wouldn't admit it to them—you **are starting to wonder how to get from “chill” to “millionaire,” and you aren't sure if your Aunt Tilda bought enough lottery tickets for your plan to pay off.**

THE BRAIN TRAINER: You have a balanced amount of time and play that allow you to learn the material, pass the test, and actually have a life. You have a variety of effective study habits and techniques at your fingertips that make your time behind the desk efficient and, most important, memorable. **When a deadline or exam comes, you are pretty relaxed because you know that you know the material.** If this is you, maybe *you* should write a book! Seriously, though, even if this *is* you, *keep reading*—I have more tools to add to your arsenal.

Getting Your Money's Worth

Now that you've identified your study persona, I'd like to suggest some specific sections to focus on as you read through the remaining chapters. You'll still want to read the whole book (and in order, preferably) to make sure you're getting your money's worth out of the deal. After you've finished reading everything from how to make your brain work for you to what Whoopi Goldberg and Albert Einstein have in common, come back to this chapter and read over these suggestions once more to see if anything pops.

The **Unperfected Perfectionist** is someone who clearly has a good work ethic but feels a bit lost about how to make sure all that hard work pays off. If this is you, you'll want to identify your learning strengths in chapter two and pay close attention to the study tricks in chapter four, as well as various note-taking tips in chapter five. For you, the drive to do well is already there—which for most people is the hardest part. So, take heart.

Once you work through the book and figure out your learning strengths and specific study strategies, you'll be better equipped to beat the books and make the grade in no time. On the off chance all this isn't enough and your grades are still dropping, don't panic. Before you get completely frustrated and turn into a Mack Slacker, read through chapter six. You may have some hidden land mines that are hurting your chances for success, simply because you haven't yet learned how to tip-toe around them.

The **Deadline Daredevil** is someone who needs a monstrous kick in the rear to get work done. If this is you, you might consider tracking down your favorite role model (preferably NOT a parent or peer for this scheme) and ask that person to check up on you (meaning, he should ask you specific questions about how your studying is going).

Call it Procrastinators Anonymous, if you like. The point is that you need someone who can look at your assignment calendar with you and help you learn how to restructure your life so you *get work done early*. (Of course, this requires having an assignment calendar in the first place—look for insider advice on that in chapter three.)

Part of what makes learning so *unmemorable* for you is that you're studying under stress. Understanding how your brain works (see chapter two) will be critical in motivating you to work ahead of your deadlines. And, creating a dependable study environment (see chapter three) will show you how to use your time more effectively. It's critical that you feel comfortable with these two chapters (as far as understanding what needs to be done and being willing to do it . . . not necessarily liking it just yet) before you move on to the rest.

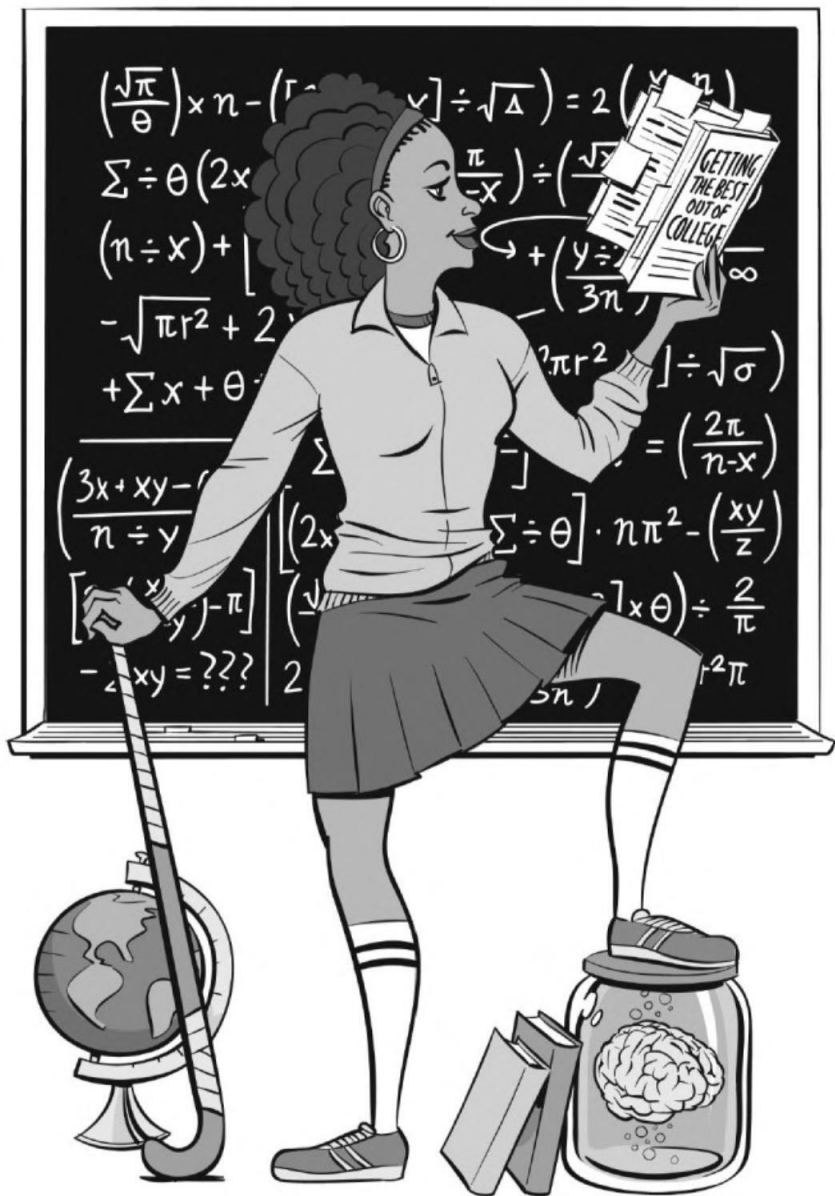
The **Mack Slacker** is someone who has convinced others (and perhaps even himself) that he believes grades don't matter. But he doesn't know how to meet his goals and so is at least willing to flip through the first few pages of this book. If that is you, thank you. Seriously. For whatever reason, studying is not your thing, but you have given this book a chance and I appreciate it.

To be honest, this book will make a lot more sense once you figure out what has made studying so awful for you. Is it a fear of failure (and you don't bother trying so you won't feel bad)? Is it that you don't know where to start (and you feel awkward asking for help), so you have given up? If you answered yes to either of these, check out chapter five, which addresses the most common complaints students have about studying. (You can even skip ahead to it first and then read the rest of the book later, though there might be a few points that won't completely make sense until you read the preceding chapters.)

However, if you don't know what has made studying seem so irrelevant, read through the book and pay close attention to chapter six. You

might even make an appointment with a school counselor. Believe it or not, school counselors are absolutely hoping you will do just that . . . really. You'll make their day. They may even give you a pass to meet with them during class. If you don't feel comfortable doing that, meet with a teacher during lunch and *take this book with you* so you can work through it together. Your teacher might have some insights into what is causing your struggles and how to best apply key points in this book to your situation. The bottom line is that someone ate your breadcrumb trail and now you need a bit of help finding your way out of the woods.

The **Brain Trainer** is someone who has mastered the art of studying and feels confident that success is on the way. If this is you, you'll want to keep reading. Yes, I know I said earlier that you should write your own book, but this one is already here for you so why not make use of it? I've known Ivy League graduates (meaning Harvard, Duke, and Stanford types) who have read this book and learned something new about themselves in the process. So, don't sell yourself short. It's a quick read, and it's very likely you'll learn something.



THE BRAIN TRAINER

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