The chances are that you are not as good a reader as you should be to do well in college. If so, it’s not surprising. You live in a culture where people watch an average of *over seven hours of television every day!!!* All that passive viewing does not allow much time for reading. Reading is a skill that must be actively practiced. The simple fact is that people who do not read very often are not likely to be strong readers.

- How much TV do you guess you watch on an average day?

Another reason besides TV for not reading much is that you may have a lot of responsibilities. You may be going to school and working at the same time, and you may have a lot of family duties as well. Given your hectic schedule, you’re not going to have much time to read. When you have free time, you’re exhausted, and it’s easier to turn on the TV than to open up a book.

- Do you do any regular reading (for example, a daily newspaper, weekly magazines, occasional novels)?

- When are you most likely to do your reading?

A third reason for not reading is that school may have caused you to associate reading with worksheets and drills and book reports and test scores. Experts agree that many schools have not done a good job of helping students discover the pleasures and rewards of reading. If reading was an unpleasant experience in school, you may have concluded that reading in general is not for you.

- Do you think that school made you dislike reading, rather than enjoy it?

Here are three final questions to ask yourself:

- Do you feel that perhaps you don’t need a reading course, since you “already know how to read”? 
If you had a choice, would you be taking a reading course? (It’s okay to be honest.)

Do you think that a bit of speed reading may be all you need?

Chances are that you don’t need to read faster as much as you need to read smarter. And it’s a safe bet that if you don’t read much, you can benefit enormously from the reading course in which you are using this book.

One goal of the book is to help you become a better reader. You will learn and practice ten key reading comprehension skills. As a result, you’ll be better able to read and understand the many materials in your other college courses. The skills in this book have direct and practical value: they can help you perform better and more quickly—giving you an edge for success—in all of your college work.

The book is also concerned with helping you become a stronger thinker, a person able not just to understand what you read but to analyze and evaluate it as well. In fact, reading and thinking are closely related skills, and practice in thoughtful reading will also strengthen your ability to think clearly and logically. To find out just how the book will help you achieve these goals, read the next several pages.

How the Book Is Organized

The book is organized into five main parts:

Introduction (pages 1–13)

In addition to this chapter, which will give you a good sense of the book, there are two other parts to the introduction. “Some Quick Study Tips” presents four hints that can make you a better student. If I had time to say just four things to incoming college students, based on my thirty years of teaching experience, these are the things I would say. The final part of the introduction, “The Power of Reading,” gives four reasons for developing the reading habit and also offers a reading challenge.
HOW TO BECOME A BETTER READER AND THINKER

Part One: Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills (pages 15–456)

To help you become a more effective reader and thinker, this book presents a series of ten key reading skills. They are listed in the table of contents on pages v and vi. Each chapter is developed in the same way.

- First of all, clear **explanations** and **examples** help you **understand** each skill.

- **Practices** then give you the “hands-on” experience needed to **learn** the skill.

- Closing each chapter are **four review tests**. The first review test provides a check of the information presented in the chapter. The second and third review tests consist of activities that help you practice the skill learned in the chapter. The fourth review test consists of a story, essay, or textbook selection that both gets you reading and gives you practice in the skill learned in the chapter as well as skills learned in previous chapters.

- Following each chapter are **six mastery tests** which gradually increase in difficulty. The tests are on tear-out pages and so can be easily removed and handed in to your instructor. So that you can track your progress, there is a score box at the top of each test. Your score can also be entered into the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover of the book.

Part Two: Ten Reading Selections (pages 457–574)

The ten reading selections that make up Part Two are followed by activities that give you practice in all of the skills studied in Part One. Each reading begins in the same way. Look, for example, at “The Professor Is a Dropout,” which starts on page 459. You’ll see two sections that come before the reading itself. The first section, “Preview,” gives you an idea of what the reading selection is about. The second one, “Words to Watch,” lists some of the challenging words in the selection, together with their meanings.

Note that the vocabulary words in “Words to Watch” are followed by the numbers of the paragraphs in which the words appear. Look at paragraphs 16, 29, and 36 of “The Professor Is a Dropout”; you’ll see that each vocabulary word is marked with a small circle (°) in the reading itself.

Activities Following Each Reading Selection

After each selection, there are four kinds of activities that will help you to improve the reading and thinking skills you learned in Part One of the book.

1. The first activity consists of **basic skill questions**—questions involving vocabulary in context, main ideas (including implied main ideas and central points), supporting details, and relationships.
2 The second activity is made up of **advanced skill questions**—ones involving inferences, purpose and tone, argument, and critical reading.

3 The third activity involves **outlining, mapping, or summarizing**. Each of these activities will sharpen your ability to get to the heart of a selection and to think logically and clearly about what you read.

4 The fourth activity consists of four **discussion questions**. These questions provide a chance for you to deepen your understanding of each selection.

**Part Three: Combined-Skills Tests (pages 575–617)**

This part of the book is made up of short passages that give you practice in all the ten reading skills taught in the book. It is similar to the standardized reading tests you may have taken as entrance exams or for placement in previous courses.

**Part Four: For Further Study (pages 619–688)**

Part Four contains additional materials that can help improve your reading.

1 The first section, “More about Summarizing and Outlining,” provides additional information and activities that your instructor may choose to cover, depending on the needs of the class.

2 The second section, “Additional Tests on Fact and Opinion,” contains four 20-item tests that you may take after you have studied Chapter 10, “Critical Reading,” in Part One.

3 The third section, “Four Additional Readings,” presents a series of short textbook selections that your instructor may assign for note-taking practice.

4 The fourth section, “Understanding Bias,” explains how to recognize a speaker’s or writer’s point of view by looking at word choices.

5 The fifth section, “Writing Assignments,” on pages 673–688, presents writing assignments for all twenty reading selections in the book. Reading and writing are closely connected skills, and writing practice will improve your ability to read closely and to think carefully.
Appendixes (pages 691–700)

Following Part Four are appendixes that include a pronunciation guide and a limited answer key.

Helpful Features of the Book

1. The book centers on *what you really need to know* to become a better reader and thinker. It presents ten key comprehension skills and explains the most important points about each one.

2. The book gives you *lots of practice*. We seldom learn a skill only by hearing or reading about it; we make it part of us by repeated practice. There are, then, numerous activities in the text. They are not “busywork,” but carefully designed materials that should help you truly learn each skill.

   Notice that after you learn each skill in Part One, you progress to review tests and mastery tests that enable you to apply the skill. And as you move from one skill to the next, the reading selections help you practice and reinforce the skills already learned.

3. The selections throughout the book are *lively and appealing*. Dull and unvaried readings work against learning, so subjects have been carefully chosen for their high interest level. Almost all of the selections here are good examples of how what we read can capture our attention. For instance, start reading “The Professor Is a Dropout,” which is about the dramatic steps one woman took to educate herself and her children—and try to *stop* reading.

   Or read “Hard Times, a Helping Hand,” which offers a lesson for our times: the inspirational story of an anonymous benefactor who shared his wealth with hundreds of people in need during the Great Depression. Or read the textbook selection “Effects of the Automobile,” which, despite its unexciting title, is full of fascinating—and thought-provoking—details about the many ways that automobiles have changed our daily lives.

4. The readings include *nine selections from college textbooks*. Therefore, you will be practicing on some materials very much like the ones in your other courses. Doing so will increase your chances of transferring what you learn in your reading class to your other college courses.
How to Use the Book

1. A good way to proceed is to read and review the explanations and examples in a given chapter in Part One until you feel you understand the ideas presented. Then carefully work through the practices. As you finish each one, check your answers with the “Limited Answer Key” that starts on page 693.

For your own sake, *don’t just copy in the answers without trying to do the practices!* The only way to learn a skill is to practice it first and then use the answer key to give yourself feedback. Also, take whatever time is needed to figure out just why you got some answers wrong. By using the answer key to help teach yourself the skills, you will prepare yourself for the review and mastery tests at the end of each chapter as well as the other reading tests in the book. Your instructor can supply you with answers to those tests.

If you have trouble catching on to a particular skill, stick with it. In time, you will learn each of the ten skills.

2. Read the selections first with the intent of simply enjoying them. There will be time afterward for rereading each selection and using it to develop your comprehension skills.

3. Keep track of your progress. Fill in the charts at the end of each chapter in Part One and each reading in Part Two. And in the “Reading Performance Chart” on the inside back cover, enter your scores for all of the review and mastery tests as well as the reading selections. These scores can give you a good view of your overall performance as you work through the book.

In summary, *Ten Steps to Advancing College Reading Skills* has been designed to interest and benefit you as much as possible. Its format is straightforward, its explanations are clear, its readings are appealing, and its many practices will help you learn through doing. *It is a book that has been created to reward effort,* and if you provide that effort, you will make yourself a better reader and a stronger thinker. I wish you success.

*John Langan*