

“Success Skills for High School, College, and Career is chock-full of insight, useful tips and hands-on exercises to develop the tools everyone needs to be more effective.”

John Hupalo, Founder & CEO at Invite Education

SUCCESS SKILLS

for High School, College, and Career

by **Cary J. Green, PhD**



REVISED

Success Skills for
High School, College, and Career

Revised

Cary J. Green, PhD

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Testimonials for

Success Skills for High School, College, and Career (Revised)

“Dr. Cary Green has identified one under-explored element of success for students and young professionals: the soft skills necessary to be great. *Success Skills for High School, College and Career* is chock-full of insight, useful tips and hands-on exercises to develop the tools everyone needs to be more effective. This thought-provoking book is a good and impactful read with big payback for those who embrace the concepts and incorporate its values into their lives.”

—John Hupalo,
Founder and CEO of Invite Education

“The key to success! If students can master what Cary Green teaches in *Success Skills for High School, College, and Career*, they will be well on their way to a bright future. Dr. Green breaks down life-changing skill sets into tangible, actionable steps, making this not just a book of theory but one that can truly make an impact. This insightful book is also filled with relatable stories and experiences to really drive home each lesson. All students should read this book.”

—Jocelyn (Paonita) Pearson,
Founder of The Scholarship System

Testimonials for

Success Skills for High School, College, and Career

**Best-Seller
in
College & University Student Life
and
Study Skills**

“This unique and inspirational book teaches students how to be successful in school right now, while developing the skills that employers absolutely need in the 21st century. Just the soft skills discussion alone, including critical thinking and problem-solving, working with others, professional communication, and time management, makes this a one-of-a-kind resource that every student must have and use to empower their future. I also highly recommend this book for parents and teachers who want to build success skills in their students.”

—Pat Wyman,
Founder and CEO of HowToLearn.com

“Believing you can achieve success is fundamental to achieving success. Cary Green’s excellent new book can help you understand your skills and abilities so that you have the confidence to go for it—confidence to take action—actions that put you on the path to a thriving, successful life. Don’t limit your future based on your current skills. Empower your future by learning from Cary and his wonderful book.”

—Rebecca Kochenderfer,
Co-Founder of Homeschool.com

“What does it take to prepare students to be college and career ready? The roadmap to get there can be found by nailing down these essential soft skills outlined in this book. Training is an investment worth making for a long-term, strategic path for your career. A proper understanding of your level of soft skills self-awareness is a major step in assessing motives and values for creating collaborative teams. The attributes, traits, and characteristics that Cary Green has defined in his *Success Skills* will serve you well in becoming an influential leader. Beyond advancing your college and career goals, these soft skills can make your life richer and more meaningful.”

—Audrey Halpern,
soft-skills trainer at ARH Training

“*Success Skills* contains a simple yet powerful set of keys that will unlock the doors standing between you and all you can be—all you are meant to be, no matter your circumstances. That’s a crucial distinction, too. No matter your past, no matter your present difficulties or obstacles, Dr. Green’s easy-to-grasp book is a road map bursting with science-backed information, tips, and advice in a clear, step-by-step plan, as well as a psychological primer illuminating the missing link between self-doubt and self-awareness, leading you to the gateway of self-confidence and achievement.”

—R.A. Conroy,
award-winning filmmaker and author
of *Shelter – Lost and Found*

“*Success Skills for High School, College, and Career* is a useful resource that will help young people build the skills they need to be successful in both academics and on the job. Highly recommended.”

—Andy Morkes,
College and Career Press

“Dr. Green captures the essence of a young adult’s mind and connects some unfamiliar areas with an action plan to learn! His book includes insights that would be accepted by teens and young adults with eagerness and optimism. As a professional counselor, I value how Dr. Green has young adults take inventory of strengths and weaknesses, as well as values and life balance. His work is impressive and useful. Dr. Green has developed a comprehensive road map for young adults to follow as they head into high school, college, and career. This is a wonderful resource to inspire, enable, and enhance the academic performance and success skills of young adults.”

—Jami Kirkbride,
Licensed Professional Counselor,
author of *The You Zoo*,
personality trainer, and mother of 7

“If you want to intentionally put yourself on the path to success, read Dr. Cary Green’s new book, *Success Skills for High School, College, and Career*, today. It is on target and direct. It hits the bull’s-eye in laserlike fashion. Dr. Green’s keen insights will benefit every student who reads the invaluable resource. It will sharpen their thinking and accelerate their journey to advancement. Having the right map makes it easier and more time-efficient to reach one’s goals. *Success Skills* is a right map and enriching read.”

—Sam X Renick,
Founder of SammyRabbit.com

Introduction

Do you want to enhance your academic performance now and prepare for future career success? Do you want to grow as a leader? If so, you must build a skill set that enables you to perform at the level of your ability.

For example, consider two students who have the same academic ability. One student attends class regularly and takes detailed notes. He participates in study groups and excels at preparing for and taking tests. This student, who demonstrates academic success skills, will perform at a higher level than the student who lacks academic success skills.

I know this example is accurate because I was the student who lacked academic success skills. I graduated in the top 10 percent of my high school class, but I earned a D during my first semester in college. (Frankly, I was surprised that my grade was that high.) That experience motivated me to develop my academic success skills.

During my twenty years as a university professor, I taught many students who took their performance to the next level by developing their academic success skills. Unfortunately, I taught many others whose performance was limited by a lack of these important skills.

Further, my interaction with employers confirmed that graduates who demonstrate leadership and soft skills stand out from their peers. I wrote this book to help you understand and build skills essential for academic success and employability. The skills are practical, impactful, and immediately applicable. Specifically, you will:

1. Construct realistic expectations for achieving success.
2. Develop self-awareness.
3. Build a future-oriented attitude.

4. Improve your academic success skills, leadership skills, and soft skills.

We will discuss key concepts of achieving success, and you will construct realistic expectations for achieving success. You will understand that intelligence alone won't make you successful and that developing your skills enables you to perform at the level of your ability. You will discover the need to develop new skills each time you advance in your education and career. And you will learn that many successful people stumble a time or two on the journey to success; if you don't understand this fact, you may mistakenly believe that a setback can prevent you from achieving success.

Successful people are reflective and understand themselves, and you, too, will develop self-awareness. You will learn to utilize your strengths and manage your weaknesses. Developing your self-awareness ensures that you understand your values and motives, and this understanding will empower you to engage in the right activities for the right reasons.

Successful people engage in activities today that benefit their future, and you will build a future-oriented attitude. You will learn to seek and engage in opportunities that enhance your success skills; many of these opportunities are discussed in this book.

Ultimately, you will improve your academic success skills, leadership skills, and soft skills via our discussion and by completing hands-on exercises. These skills will contribute to your success in the classroom, on the job, and in your relationships.

Success Skills Defined

Academic success skills are techniques and actions that allow you to perform at the level of your academic ability. Successful students develop effective study skills, such as note-taking and reading for understanding. These students think critically and excel at preparing for and taking exams. Successful students utilize resources ranging from teachers and advisors to academic success and writing centers.

These students actively engage in their education and participate in learning communities and study groups. They also participate in experiential education opportunities and develop portfolios to showcase their accomplishments.

Leadership often is equated to influence (Maxwell, 2007). Leaders have the influence to move people toward a common goal. The greater your leadership ability, the greater your ability to leverage the skills and abilities of others. Leaders can accomplish more through the people they lead than they can by themselves.

You must develop your leadership skills if you want to influence others and truly make a difference in your family, school, community, workplace, and world. Throughout this book, I put a special emphasis on empowering you to become a successful leader. You will discover that leadership is not dependent on your title, and you may be in a leadership role now.

I define soft skills as “a collection of abilities, behaviors, and attitudes that increase your effectiveness.” Soft skills differ from, but are complementary to, technical (or hard) skills, such as accounting or computer programming skills. Successful engineers possess the knowledge and technical skills of engineering. Successful engineers also demonstrate soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, and professionalism and are able to work effectively with clients and coworkers.

Soft skills are not tied to a specific career or discipline and are sometimes called “transferable skills.” Students who develop their soft skills can enhance their academic performance and transfer the skills to their future career.

Common examples of soft skills include:

1. Critical thinking and problem-solving
2. Written and oral communication
3. Ability to work effectively on a team
4. Time management
5. Professionalism

The Importance of Success Skills

Noted leadership expert John Maxwell states that “leadership ability determines effectiveness” (Maxwell, 2007). In other words, the greater your leadership ability, the greater your potential to influence others and achieve success. Further, a recent survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2017) showed that 80 percent of employers look for evidence of leadership skills when evaluating potential employees.

Employers also place a high value on soft skills. CareerBuilder surveyed two thousand human resources specialists and found that 77 percent ranked soft skills as important as hard skills (CareerBuilder, 2014). Despite the importance of soft skills, employers commonly report them as lacking in new hires. Adecco USA surveyed five hundred senior executives and found that 92 percent reported skills deficits in new hires, and 44 percent reported a lack of soft skills (Adecco USA, 2020).

Academic success skills are important for academic performance and timely graduation. According to the US Department of Education (US Department of Education, 2017), 41 percent of first-time, full-time, four-year-degree-seeking undergraduate students who enrolled in a four-year degree-granting institution in the fall of 2010 graduated within four years. The percentage increased to 56 percent within five years and to 60 percent within six years.

Students who graduate with their “four-year” degree in five or six years do so at great expense. The average annual cost of a public four-year college in the US is about \$17,237 (US Department of Education, 2019). The average starting salary of a college graduate is about \$50,994 (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2019). Thus, a student who takes an extra year to graduate essentially loses \$68,000 (\$17,000 in tuition costs and \$51,000 in lost income). The amount doubles to

a \$136,000 loss for students who take an extra two years.

Although several factors influence academic performance, many students can improve their performance and achieve a timelier graduation by utilizing academic success skills.

Developing Success Skills

I believe there are three keys to developing success skills. First, you must know what you need to know. We will discuss many aspects of achieving success, and you will discover much of what you need to know to be successful. Second, you must put forth the effort necessary to develop the abilities and behaviors that you need.

Maintaining a positive attitude is the third key to developing your success skills. Although you may get discouraged or frustrated from time to time, your positive attitude will give you the emotional buoyancy needed to move ahead. Successful leaders control their attitude even when they cannot control their circumstances.

Further, successful leaders recognize their potential, demonstrate confidence, and truly believe they can succeed. Please understand that believing you can succeed does not mean that you are arrogant or think you are better than others. Rather, belief in yourself provides the confidence needed to step up to challenges and to handle setbacks.

Successful leaders balance their confidence with humility. Genuine humility indicates inner strength and security. Humility allows leaders to admit when they are wrong, seek input from others, and respond appropriately to constructive criticism. Humble leaders gladly share credit and are quick to praise others.

You will grow as a person and as a leader as you put forth effort to learn and apply the concepts in this book. Don't let a lack of confidence or a prior setback hold you back. I know several successful people who have overcome setbacks or who were told they would not succeed. As I mentioned earlier, I nearly dropped out of college because of my poor academic performance.

Finally, I challenge you to never give up on your journey to success. Sheer determination and “want to” are powerful tools that will help you succeed. You can accomplish much in life if you dare to believe in yourself, make the commitment to succeed, and put forth real effort.

Getting the Most Out of This Book



You will discover leadership and soft skills within a framework of “readiness,” “relationships,” and “results.” Readiness teaches you self-awareness and emphasizes the need to understand yourself, maintain a positive attitude, look for and take advantage of opportunities, and overcome challenges. Relationships teaches you to communicate effectively, forge authentic connections in your personal and professional life, and be professional. Results teaches you to be future-oriented and emphasizes the need to know your values and priorities, set and achieve goals, think critically and solve problems, and be accountable. Readiness focuses on you. Relationships focuses on your interactions with others. Results focuses on your ability to get the job done.

Many leadership and soft skills contribute to academic success, so you will learn them first. You will then learn specific academic success skills. You will develop your academic success skills by utilizing academic best practices and by using academic success resources.

I suggest you read this book in its entirety to get the big picture *before* you answer the questions or work the exercises. Keep a journal of your thoughts and questions as you read. Once you

have read the whole book, read it again, answering the questions and working the exercises within each chapter. Review the key points at the end of each chapter. Review again material that is not clear. Complete the supplementary exercises available in the free application workbook (<https://www.Skills4Students.com>).

Seek a mentor to hold you accountable and help you on your journey. Make a commitment to grow, and please understand that developing success skills is a process. If you want to improve your three-point shooting ability, you can't just read a book on basketball. You first must learn the fundamentals of shooting and then shoot a lot of three-pointers. Developing your success skills is similar; you must understand success skills and then work purposefully to develop those skills.

Finally, please reflect on what you learn in each chapter by answering the following questions:

1. In your own words, explain the main points of the chapter.
2. What are the three most significant things you learned from the chapter?
3. List three specific actions you will take to apply what you learned in the chapter.
4. What benefit will you experience by following through on these actions?

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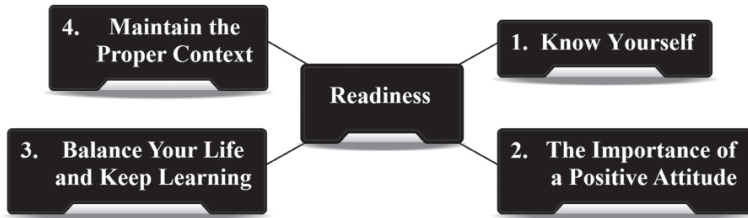
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Part I: Readiness



I discuss readiness in terms of being prepared to handle whatever comes your way. Successful people are ready to take advantage of opportunities and to handle occasional trials and setbacks. My expectation is that you will be ready and that you will continue to grow as a leader. To be ready, you must know yourself, maintain a positive attitude, balance your life, keep learning, and maintain the proper context.

Knowing yourself means that you are self-aware and recognize your strengths and weaknesses. Each of us has unique strengths, and we are more effective when utilizing our strengths. Similarly, managing your weaknesses is critical for your success. When you evaluate your weaknesses, you may find that an apparent weakness can often be overcome by working harder and smarter.

Challenging yourself requires you to step up to activities or responsibilities that stretch you. Doing so refines your existing skills and builds new skills. The new-and-improved skills will bolster your confidence and provide momentum for further growth. Reflecting on your experiences will help you grow even more. Experience is a great teacher—if you reflect and learn from your experiences. Reflecting on things that stress you and motivate you can help you identify the need to take a break or change directions.

Attitude is a critically important component of readiness. Your attitude has a great influence on your relationships, productivity, and happiness. If you want to be a successful leader, then learn

to maintain a positive attitude; this attitude will inspire and encourage the people around you. Furthermore, a positive attitude will help you overcome setbacks and struggles you will encounter. Conversely, a negative attitude can damage your relationships and undermine your skills. Surrounding yourself with positive people helps you maintain a positive attitude.

Readiness requires that you balance your life and never stop learning. If your life is out of balance, long-term success and happiness will be difficult to achieve. Balance is achieved when you spend quality time in each of the important areas of your life. Furthermore, you must look for opportunities to learn throughout your life.

Readiness requires that you maintain the proper context so you don't get so caught up in what you are doing that you lose sight of your overall goals. If you lose sight, you can burn out and want to quit. Keeping focused on your big goals while working on small, and occasionally boring, steps along the way to your goal is the key to avoiding burnout.

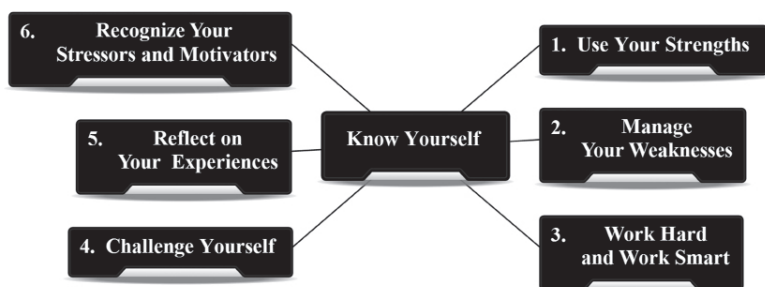
Maintaining the proper context also can help you stay motivated after a loss or setback. Don't lose sight of the big picture of your life if you fail occasionally or struggle. Don't be defined by what knocks you down; be defined by what you move forward to accomplish.

Although being ready makes sense, sometimes we can be tempted to “wing it,” rather than working hard to prepare. If you are not prepared, you may not fail, but you likely won't perform at a high level. As will be discussed later, successful people consistently perform at a high level, and their productivity is not limited by a lack of effort.

You may have been successful in the past without need for much preparation. As you progress through life, however, preparation becomes increasingly important. Adopting a sports analogy, teams may win a few games when unprepared but certainly will lose many more—especially as the competition get tougher.

The bottom line is that you must be ready to take advantage of opportunities, overcome challenges, and reach your goals. Developing your success skills will enhance your readiness.

Chapter 1: Know Yourself



Knowing yourself enables you to take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges. We each have skills, abilities, and perspectives that allow us to make unique contributions. The better you recognize your strengths and your unique ability to make a difference, the readier you will be to leverage your opportunities.

A colleague of mine has a program he calls “The I in Team.” You probably have heard that there is no “I” in team. My colleague, however, teaches that each individual team member must contribute to the overall success of the team. Don’t misinterpret this “I” as being the star of the team, but rather use your strengths to help your team succeed. By making strong contributions to a successful team, you set yourself up for opportunities as an individual.

Use Your Strengths

The first step in using your strengths, of course, is identifying them. Begin to identify your strengths by answering these questions:

1. What do you think your strengths are?
2. What do your friends say your strengths are? (Ask three or four friends.)
3. What are you passionate about?
4. What do people ask you to do?

Refer to the application workbook or search “identifying my strengths” online for additional tools and resources. If you are a student, contact your advisor or counselor to identify resources. University students can find resources at the campus career center. Additionally, ask your mentor what he or she sees as your strengths.

Please list your strengths below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

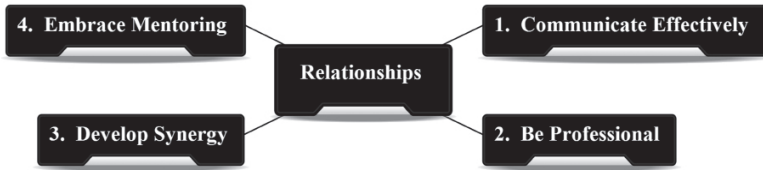
Once you know your strengths, use them. For example, if you have strength in communication, write for your school’s newspaper or website, start a blog, or enter a public-speaking competition.

Creating opportunities to use your strengths allows your strengths to create opportunities for you. For example, writing a blog for your school gives you networking visibility that could lead to an internship. Plus, your blogging experience enhances your resume and can pay dividends when you apply for college, scholarships, awards, and jobs.

Below, list opportunities to leverage your strengths, and then make a commitment to follow through on each opportunity.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Part II: Relationships



Relationships are important in the classroom and on the job. To succeed, you must be competent, and you also must work effectively with others. I have worked with some very gifted individuals who were poor collaborators. They were smart, but their productivity was limited by their inability to work effectively with others. I also have worked with exceptional individuals who excelled at their jobs and were great people with whom to work. Please understand that successful people excel at what they do and also create and maintain relationships.

Furthermore, relationships yield a network of friends and contacts. Networking often provides leads for jobs and resources for solving problems, both of which can greatly enhance your success. Perhaps you have heard the expression, “It’s not *what* you know but *who* you know that is important.” Networking is about who you know.

Finally, the overall quality of your life often mirrors the quality of your relationships. If you are not as happy, productive, or fulfilled as you would like to be, take an inventory of your relationships. Invest time in your relationships that are not as strong as they could be. And, as recommended earlier, surround yourself with people who inspire, encourage, and support you. Lastly, be sure that you are a positive influence on your friends.

Our discussion of relationships includes effective communication, professionalism, synergy, and mentoring. Effective communication skills are essential for strong relationships. Focusing on your audience so that your audience understands your

message is key for effective communication. Doing so requires clarity and an understanding of what is important to them. Furthermore, effective communicators are good listeners. They also encourage and show appreciation. Effective leaders must be effective communicators.

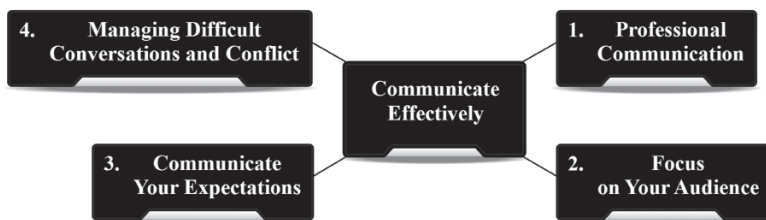
Professionalism is another key aspect of building effective relationships. A professional is a person who is competent and is an effective communicator. Professionals see beyond differences and can work with diverse groups of people. Professionals are strongly committed to high integrity and follow through on their commitments. When your integrity is high and you follow through, people quickly learn they can trust you. Trust is foundational to effective relationships.

Synergy is an outcome of effective relationships and refers to the ability of people working together to achieve more than if they had worked individually. Synergy is amplified in teams that are diverse in expertise, perspective, and experience. Synergistic teams know who (X) is responsible for doing what (Y) and by when (Z) it is to be completed.

Synergistic relationships require each person to work on his or her responsibilities. Leaders delegate tasks that others can do so that the leader can focus on activities only she can do. Team members refrain from delegating work upward, and they take a few potential solutions when they take a problem to the boss.

We end our discussion on relationships with mentoring. An effective mentor can broaden your perspective and help you make wise decisions, develop skills, and work through obstacles. To benefit from mentoring, be willing to listen and apply what you learn. Furthermore, you can mentor others by sharing your experience with them.

Chapter 5: Communicate Effectively



Effective communication skills are important for your relationships, and for your success in the classroom and on the job. However, despite the importance of communication skills, employers often report that college graduates are lacking in soft skills, particularly communication skills.

Hart Research Associates (2015) surveyed four hundred employers and reported that over 80 percent of the respondents ranked written and oral communication skills as very important. The survey also showed that less than 30 percent ranked college graduates as well prepared in written and oral communication skills.

Developing the mechanics of your communication skills is important but is beyond the scope of this book. Prioritize development of your writing and speaking skills by enrolling in written and oral communication courses. As discussed in the section called “Academic Success Resources,” college students can improve their communication skills by utilizing the resources available at the writing center on campus. Further, the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University is an excellent resource and can be accessed at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

Please keep in mind that although grammar/spell-checker programs continue to improve, the checkers are not perfect and do not substitute for well-developed writing skills. For example, I once typed the formula for sodium bicarbonate, NaHCO_3 , into my

class notes; my spell-checker recommended I change the formula to “nacho.” (Definitely a cheesy recommendation.)

Professional Communication

Professional communication with teachers, coworkers, customers, and employers differs from informal communication with family and friends. Clarity of content, context, and intent is key to effective professional communication. Content, of course, is the message you want to communicate. Context helps your audience understand the background of your content, and intent lets your audience know the reason for your communication.

Clear communication requires deliberate effort and a focus on the little details that make a big difference. Let’s consider an example of a student council president following up on some tasks she delegated at a recent meeting. The president could send a vague text to one of her officers: “Hey, man. Ya get that done?”

Maybe the officer will understand what she is asking, or maybe he won’t. Is she asking about a chemistry lab report, a math assignment, or something else? Without clear context and intent, the content can be vague.

Here is a clarified example: “Keegan, at the last student council meeting, you agreed to find three local businesses to donate items for our charity auction. [Context.] I am following up to ask if you have gotten the donations. [Intent.]”

This simple example illustrates the importance of clarity and ensuring that your recipient understands the context and intent of your communication.

Students should realize that their teachers often interact with dozens of students. If you attend a large high school or university, your teacher may instruct two or three hundred students—or more. Thus, your teacher may not immediately recognize the context and intent of your communication. Clarity can make your communication more effective. (Examples of clear communication are included in the application workbook.)

Professional communication should be direct, as well as clear. Communicating directly can be intimidating for some people, but leaders need the courage to step up and say what needs to be said. Professionals express their opinions, challenge ideas, and provide constructive criticism without creating unnecessary conflict. (Advice for doing so is provided later in this chapter in “Managing Difficult Conversations and Conflict.”)

Let’s end our professional communication discussion with an example of *unprofessional* communication. I was once invited for a job interview. Upon arrival, I was informed that I was not qualified and was asked why I was there. Suffice it to say, I got mad. I got defensive and raised my voice. I already was stressed about the interview, and now I felt disrespected. I felt justified in reacting like I did. After all, I was a victim of an injustice, right?

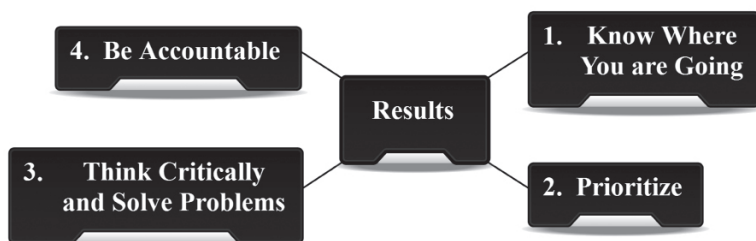
What can we learn from this experience? First, my communication was unprofessional. Effective leaders should always communicate professionally. Effective leaders (and people in general) should control their emotions and actions: a process known as self-regulation. I, however, reacted to my first impulse without thinking.

Remember, nobody can *make* you mad. I *chose* to get mad, and nothing good came out of it. The moral of the story is that you should take personal responsibility for your actions, regardless of the circumstances. You don’t have to be unemotional, and you certainly don’t have to let people mistreat you. But understand that self-regulation is a key soft skill. Think before you respond. (Professional communication will be discussed further in the next chapter.)

Focus on Your Audience

There is a saying in education: “Students don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” I believe the same principle applies to communication. Effective communicators convey authenticity and genuine concern for their audience. Whether communicating

Part III: Results



Success requires a focus on results, and producing results is different from being busy. Understanding the difference between doing *something* and doing *something important* is vital to your success.

Some people are busy all the time but produce few impactful results. To produce impactful results, you must know where you are going, prioritize your activities, think critically, and solve problems—and you must be accountable.

Knowing where you are going means that you know your values and that you set meaningful goals. Anchoring your goals to your values is the key to setting and achieving meaningful goals. Goals not anchored to values are rarely achieved, and the impact is small when they are achieved.

Prioritization is the process of focusing your time and effort on achieving your goals. Successful people understand that everything is not important. *Spending* time on things that are not important will prevent you from *investing* time in your priorities. Learn to protect your time from urgent but unimportant activities, and don't let someone else's priorities knock you off course.

Productivity requires the ability to think critically and solve problems. You must develop the ability to clearly define a problem and construct well-thought-out solutions. Solving problems will increase your influence, and the greater your influence, the greater your potential for opportunity and success.

We end our discussion on results with accountability. To

be successful, you must take responsibility for your productivity, behavior, attitude, and mistakes. You must be accountable to yourself by performing at the level of your ability. Finally, accountability requires you to admit your mistakes, learn from them, and then move on.

on additional work. Your boss may pile additional work on you. How should you handle the increased workload? Ask your boss to help you prioritize your tasks, so you complete the most important tasks first.

Planning and Completing Projects

Let's go through a practical example to help you prioritize your time and achieve your goals/complete your projects. I use this simple process to stay organized, manage time, and stay focused on priorities. This approach builds on the outlining process described in "Setting and Achieving Goals." When you set a goal or plan a project:

1. Outline the steps needed to complete the project.
2. Estimate the time required to complete each step.
3. Determine the deadline for each step.
4. Schedule in your calendar time to complete each step.
5. Stay focused on your priorities.
6. Assess your progress and stay on track.

Be sure to adjust all deadlines so you can finish your project by its deadline. You can build in a cushion of a day or two, just in case you need some extra time.

Refer to Table 2 as we work through an example of planning and completing a term paper. (A planning template is available in the application workbook.)

I listed each step required to complete the term paper and estimated the time required for each step. I estimated that selecting a topic would take an hour. The deadline was April 15, so I scheduled an hour on April 15 to get it done. I estimated that conducting research would take six hours, and I set a deadline of April 25. I scheduled two-hour time blocks on April 17, April 19, and April 24. Doing so provided the six hours I needed to

Table 2. Project-planning template.

Step #	Description	Duration	Deadline	Scheduled time to complete each step	
				Date and Time	
1	Select topic	1	4/15	Apr 15, 1–2 p.m.	
2	Make an outline	2	4/16	Apr 15, 2–3 p.m.	Apr 16, 9–10 a.m.
3	Conduct research	6	4/25	Apr 17, 3–5 p.m.	Apr 19, 1–3 p.m.
4	Revise outline	1	4/26	Apr 26, 2–3 p.m.	
5	Write first draft	3	4/27	Apr 26, 3–5 p.m.	Apr 27, 10–11 a.m.
6	Review draft	1	4/29	Apr 29, 4–5 p.m.	
7	Conduct additional research	2	4/30	Apr 30, 8–10 a.m.	
8	Write second draft	2	5/2	May 1, 1–2 p.m.	May 2, 3–4 p.m.
9	Have someone review second draft	NA	5/2	NA	
10	Write final draft	2	5/12	May 11, 1–2 p.m.	May 12, 8–9 a.m.
11	Final edits and final polishing	1	5/13	May 13, 9–10 a.m.	
12	Submit	NA	5/14	NA	

complete the research and allowed me to complete the step before the deadline.

I set the duration as “NA” on steps 9 and 12. These steps were simple activities that I could complete quickly and didn’t require a time block. For step 9, I merely needed to send an email to a friend and ask her to review my draft.

To maximize the value of this system, you must accurately estimate how long it takes to complete each step. You will learn to accurately estimate your time with a little practice. Of course, making this plan is important, but commitment is ultimately required to move it from a plan to a successful outcome.

If a time conflict arises, you can reschedule a step to another time. Be sure to stick to your overall schedule so you complete your project on time. Stay focused and put forth your best effort.

Let me end with the time-management advice I give to students. At the beginning of each semester, add to your calendar your class schedule, work schedule, student organization meetings, and other known time commitments for the entire semester. Then set aside time each week of the semester to complete your school work. You might schedule six or eight 2-hour blocks each week. Doing so will ensure that you always have time available each week to complete your school work. At the beginning of the semester, you may not know what you will have to work on during the eleventh week of the semester, but you will know that you have time scheduled to do it.

Key points from Chapter 10:

1. *Busyness* (doing something) is different from *productivity* (doing something important).
2. Focus your effort on your priorities.
3. Urgent issues, whether your own or someone else’s, are not necessarily priority issues.
4. Learn to say no.

5. “Good” activities can interfere with priority activities.
6. Outline all steps needed to complete your projects.
7. Assign a duration and deadline to each step.
8. Schedule work/study time blocks into your calendar and keep these “meetings” with yourself.

Part IV: Academic Success Skills



As we previously discussed, skills in time management, goal setting, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and accountability contribute to academic success. Here, we will discuss additional skills that contribute directly to academic success.

I define academic success as “performing at the level of your academic ability.” Performing at the level of your academic ability does not require you to get straight As. Performing at the level of your academic ability means that your academic performance is not limited by factors within your control. Performing at the level of your academic ability requires that you put forth your best effort, use academic best practices, and utilize the academic resources available to you.

I define academic success skills as “techniques and actions that enable you to perform at the level of your academic ability.” Well-developed academic success skills are essential for students. Conversely, poorly developed academic success skills can limit you. As discussed earlier, I learned the value of academic success skills by nearly flunking my first-semester freshman chemistry course in college. Recall that this setback caused me to question my academic ability, and I was not sure I could succeed in college. I soon realized, however, that my academic performance was limited by poorly developed academic success skills. I developed my skills and succeeded. You, too, can boost your academic performance by developing your academic success skills. Please understand that

many college freshmen quickly discover that academic success skills used in high school are inadequate for college.

Refine your plan as needed to continually make progress.

Learn from others as you develop your success skills. Seek help when you need it and respond appropriately to constructive criticism. Doing so fosters continual improvement and contributes to long-term success.

Please understand that improving your success skills is a *process* and know that you don't have to improve all your skills at once. Don't expect perfection but strive for improvement.

A Final Word of Encouragement

This book is an excellent example of what can be accomplished if you set a big goal and put forth real effort. I was not sure I could write something that young people would want to read. Because the goal of writing the book was anchored to my values, however, I determined that I would put my best effort into writing this book. The fact that you are reading it is testimony that big goals can be achieved. (And the fact that you are reading the revised edition demonstrates the importance of reflection and the relentless pursuit of improvement.)

If you believe in yourself, remain fiercely committed to your goals, and put forth your best effort, you will be limited only by your imagination. My expectation is that you will do what I have done: set big goals aligned with your values, commit yourself to your goals, and make them happen.

Finally, understand that one can't truly succeed without serving others. Successful leaders look beyond themselves and seek to make a difference in the lives of others. Make a deliberate effort to invest in the lives of those in your sphere of influence. As your success skills improve, your influence will increase—and so will the number of lives you can impact.

Thanks for reading my book. Please visit <https://www.Skills4Students.com> for additional resources.

“The keys to success! Dr. Green breaks down life-changing skill sets into tangible, actionable steps, making this not just a book of theory but one that can truly make an impact.”

Jocelyn (Paonita) Pearson, Founder of The Scholarship Program

Successful students and employees have something in common: a well-developed skill set that transcends book smarts.

This book is for you if you are a high school or college student who wants to:

- ✓ Develop key academic success skills
- ✓ Develop leadership skills
- ✓ Build soft skills that employers seek:
 - Communication & collaboration
 - Critical thinking & problem-solving
 - Time management & professionalism

Parents and teachers, do you want to equip your students with skills and experiences essential for success in the classroom and on the job? If so, this practical book is a great resource.

Cary J. Green, PhD, equips students with skills for academic success and employability. Dr. Green spent twenty years teaching and advising university students before starting his own business. He has served as director of a recruiting and career center, department chair, and associate dean for academic programs. He received a Parent and Teacher Choice Award from HowToLearn.com, and Parenting 2.0 recognized him as a Global Presence Ambassador for his commitment to developing success skills in young people. Learn more at Skills4Students.com.

A free, 50-page application workbook is available from Skills4Students.com.

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