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## PREFACE

# OR WHY YOU SHOULD REALLY CARE ABOUT WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

If you want to know the best way to learn, this book is for you.

*Study Like a Champ* provides you with the answer to the oft-asked question “What can I do to get an A?” We take years of psychological research on how learning works and what strategies best help one learn, and we translate the results into easy-to-understand, pragmatic—and, most important—easy-to-follow tips. But that’s not all.

We have watched and listened as our students have tried to study better. We have seen students read other books on how to study yet still not improve. Part of the reason why is that it is easy for scientists and instructors to tell you what to do, but it is a whole other thing to actually be able to do it. So, we looked for reasons why students have trouble following guidance on how to study and have come up with some hacks to help. We also show you evidence to support our recommendations. We want you to know what to do and why to do it.

Furthermore, we show you which strategies work best for learning different kinds of material. Not every class is the same. What it takes to do well in an introductory psychology class may not be the same as what it takes to do well in a computer science class. We have your back.

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This guide was written by expert psychology teachers who also conduct the very research on which the tips are based. You are in good hands. Collectively, we have published more than 200 research articles on the very material we share with you. We invite you behind the curtain so you can see the secrets of research conducted both in laboratories as well as in classrooms. However, although we are well versed in writing for peer-reviewed research journals, we wrote this book for you, dear student, not for academic researchers. This book is designed to be useful for every college student who wants to know how to learn well.

We recognize that many instructors do not spend much time teaching students how to learn. Many college faculty either believe students have learned how to learn either in high school or in a University 101-type course, or they do not believe it is their job to teach learning skills. In other cases, faculty may share suggestions about the best ways to study (e.g., “Make sure you spread out your studying,” “Make sure you test yourself”) but do not share exactly how to follow the advice; nor do they reward optimal study habits. Even hard-working students often believe that it is the amount of time that they study, not exactly how they use that time to study, that is most important. We wrote this book to address these issues head on—to explain how to schedule your study time and exactly what to do when you sit down to study.

We also want to demystify the cognitive science behind how people learn, and thus we provide simple, classroom-tested tools to begin and maintain habits that will foster lifelong learning. We want you to be a Study Champion; accordingly, we provide clear steps on how to plan, monitor, and evaluate your learning with easy-to-follow instructions. In essence, we first explain what to do, and then we show why each step matters. This is not a textbook; it is your training manual to become a Study Champion.

## OUR ORIGIN STORY

At one time, we were both graduate students at the University of Washington in Seattle. We were not the same age as we are now, and we definitely did not have the same length of hair back then; John evidently did not understand what a barber was for. Regan remembers his first sight of John as being a blur of hair flying by as John strode down the corridor to his lab past Regan's office. John is a cognitive psychologist. Regan is a social psychologist. We both love trying to understand what makes people learn better. After graduate school, we went in two different directions: both literally, in terms of geography, and figuratively, in terms of our research interests.

Fast-forward a sizable number of years. We were both successful researchers and established teachers and noticed that so much good science was available *about* learning, but so little of it focused on how to explain the science to students. Sometimes instructors would tell students what to do in one class, but most of the faculty we talked with shared that they focused more on content in their classes and did not share how their students should best learn the content. And, after all, many faculty (who are not experts on cognition) have misconceptions about learning!

## A FEW KEY ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We decided to take action. We began by looking at the different books on studying already out there and felt we had something new and different to say. We got some early support from Eric Landrum and Christine Cardone, who thought this was a great idea and urged us to surge forward. Christine also read through early versions of these chapters and provided some helpful feedback. We appreciate it. We were met with great enthusiasm by another Chris, Christopher Kelaher, at American Psychological Association Books, who signed

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us to a contract and got this book into production in record time. Beth Hatch was a supportive and eagle-eyed development editor, and three reviewers provided critical points for us to ponder in creating the final version. A special shout out goes to Paige Herrboldt, who created all the end-of-chapter artwork especially for this book.

Both of us are inspired by our students and by a passion to share psychological science with them and now with you. Many of the examples in this book come from real student questions, comments, and outbursts. Yes, we got some ideas from Instagram memes and college TikTok videos as well.

We would also like to thank our partners in particular for their support. In addition, we were aided by the company of one very cute cat, Haki (John), and darling dog, Katsu (Regan).