THE PSYCHOLOGIST’S COMPANION FOR UNDERGRADUATES
A Guide to Success for College Students

The Psychologist's Companion for Undergraduates is intended for college students seeking inspiration and guidelines for better scientific communication. This book includes the latest style guidelines of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Sixth Edition, 2009) as well as chapters encompassing the entire research process from doing literature research and planning an experiment to writing a paper.

Robert J. Sternberg is Professor of Human Development at Cornell University and Honorary Professor of Psychology at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Sternberg was formerly the President of the American Psychological Association and the Federation of Associations of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. The central focus of his research is on intelligence, creativity, and wisdom. He has also studied love and close relationships as well as hate. He is the author of more than 1,600 journal articles, book chapters, and books; has received more than $20 million in government and other grants and contracts for his research, conducted on five different continents; and has won more than two dozen awards for his research. Sternberg has been listed in the APA Monitor on Psychology and in the Archives of Scientific Psychology as one of the top 100 psychologists of modern times, and has been listed by the ISI as one of its most highly cited authors in psychology and psychiatry. He has been cited in the professional literature over 115,000 times. He has been awarded both the William James Award and the James McKeen Cattell Award of the Association for Psychological Science.

Karin Sternberg is Research Associate in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University. She has a PhD in psychology from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and an MBA with a specialization in banking from the University of Cooperative Education in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has studied at Yale University and did her postdoctoral work in social psychology at the University of Connecticut. Sternberg worked as a research associate at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and School of Public Health. She held a grant from the National Institute of Aging on developing cognitive skills in older individuals. She is the author of Psychology of Love 101.
The Psychologist’s Companion for Undergraduates

A Guide to Success for College Students

Robert J. Sternberg
Cornell University

Karin Sternberg
Cornell University
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>page vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part I  Planning and Formulating Papers  5

1  Getting Started                       | 7       |
2  Eight Common Misconceptions About Psychology Papers | 10      |
3  How to Generate, Evaluate, and Present Your Ideas for Research and Papers | 26      |
4  Literature Research                   | 50      |
5  Writing a Literature Review           | 66      |
6  Planning and Writing the Experimental Research Paper | 88      |
7  Ethics in Research and Writing        | 132     |

### Part II  Presenting Your Ideas in Writing  147

8  A Word About Content, Language, and Style | 149     |
9  Commonly Misused Words                 | 176     |
10  American Psychological Association Guidelines for Psychology Papers | 200     |
11  Guidelines for Data Presentation     | 229     |
vi  Contents

Part III  Writing and Preparing Papers for Journal Submission  255
12  Paper Writing 101  257
13  How to Make Your Paper even Better: Proofreading, Revising, and Editing  267

Part IV  Presenting Yourself to Others  273
14  Preparing a Poster Presentation  275
15  Writing a Talk  282
   Epilogue  290
   References  291
   Index  295
Chapter 10 contains a summary of the guidelines in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (Sixth Edition). We gratefully acknowledge the *APA Publication Manual*'s contribution to this chapter.
The Psychologist's Companion for Undergraduates is intended for college students seeking inspiration and definitive guidelines for better scientific communication and success. The book covers topics such as misconceptions about psychology papers; rules for writing literature reviews and experimental papers; how best to make use of the Internet in research; content, language, and style guidelines; commonly misused words; guidelines for data presentation; standards for evaluating papers; preparing posters; and how to write talks and papers.

Some readers will work their way through this book from cover to cover. Others will read only selected chapters. For the sake of the latter readers, we sometimes have repeated in later chapters material mentioned in earlier chapters. If a point is relevant to a chapter, we include it to ensure that readers can learn it.