

A GUIDE FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

James H. Korn, Mary Stephen, and Jason Sikorski

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An [earlier version](#) of this e-book was published in 2010 on the Society for the Teaching of Psychology website and was written specifically for psychology teachers. This version has been expanded to apply to all areas of teaching, including the humanities, arts, sciences, and professions.

Unit 1

Introduction

Welcome! You will be working electronically to prepare for one of the most challenging and rewarding of all human activities – teaching.

The Philosophy of this Guide

Teaching is an extremely complex activity. Those of us who begin to think that we are pretty good at it often are humbled by our failures in the classroom, and even experienced teachers realize that there always is more to learn. While this Guide has been designed for new teachers (graduate students and less experienced faculty), teachers at any level may find it's content to be helpful. We also hope that instructors new to teaching a course on teaching will find the Guide a useful as an alternative or supplement to a traditional textbook on teaching.

The general philosophy of the program contained in this Guide is based on two ideas: First, all elements of teaching are inter-related, and second, one's personal philosophy of teaching provides the basis for how an individual thinks about teaching and does as a teacher in and out of the classroom. That is why we begin in Unit 2 with the development of the teaching philosophy and ask you to continue to revise that document as we go through the following units. Your beliefs about teaching will frequently be challenged by the decisions you make about plans, methods, and assessment. Consequently you must revise either what you believe or what you do or both. This can happen for the experienced teacher as well as for graduate students preparing to teach their first course.

The inter-related nature of teaching will be apparent in our frequent requests that you examine the links between various aspects of your teaching, for example, how your course objectives are related to student assessment. The process of our program is linear and logical. However, that is not the only way that teachers develop their courses, and in many cases, not the primary way, so you will find that sometimes as you go through the guide you will be asked to take the perspective of an artist and at other times, a scientist. The process used in this Guide will require your active participation. Each unit will include narrative commentary combined with learning activities, critical thinking interruptions, and suggestions for outside reading. The specific objectives for each unit support the following general goals: Develop a personal philosophy of teaching.

- Use the principles of course planning to design a course.
- Develop and practice teaching skills, including lecturing, classroom and online discussion management, and student assessment.
- Become aware of the literature on teaching and the resources available to support your teaching.
- Develop a plan for your continuing professional development as a teacher, including development of a teaching portfolio.

The last goal reinforces the fact that teaching is a profession, and like other professions it requires education and training that begins in graduate school and continues throughout one's career. Unfortunately, many graduate programs provide little or no preparation for someone interested in teaching in higher education. This Guide is intended to begin to fill that gap. Involvement in a profession also includes joining the relevant professional organizations, attending professional meetings, and working on committees, which may eventually evolve into

a leadership role. It also means subscribing to teaching journals, reading books on teaching, and contributing your own research and ideas to the literature. Examples of professional organizations include: [The Society for the Teaching of Psychology](#), [National Council of Teachers of English](#), [National Science Teachers Association](#), [American Educational Research Association](#), and [American Society for Engineering Education](#). The US Department of Education has created a [list of educational associations and organizations](#) that you may find helpful.

Teaching is a generic skill that is used in a variety of non-academic settings. For example, clinical and organizational psychologists often are engaged in training activities. In medical settings teaching is done in "grand rounds" format or when providing information and directions to patients. Professionals in business and engineering make presentations to groups. Even if you do not see your future professional role as an academic, most of the objectives of our program will assist you with these alternative forms of teaching.

This is the second version of this book. The [first version](#) was written specifically for psychology teachers. The second version takes the ideas and methods presented in the first version and generalizes them to apply to all areas of teaching, including the humanities, arts, sciences, and professions.

Your first learning activity.

Take about five minutes to think about your personal goals for this program.

Write your goals down.

If this were a "live" course, we would ask you to exchange your list of goals with another student in the class. You will find this program most beneficial if you

find someone to serve as a surrogate classmate to help you reflect on your work throughout this program.

The following quotation demonstrates how teaching can be both a source of joy and a source of frustration; both inspirational and humbling.

We Teach Who We Are

I am a teacher at heart, and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illuminated by the lightning-life of the mind – then teaching is the finest work I know.

But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused – and I am so powerless to do anything about it – that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere; in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way. What a fool I was to imagine that I had mastered this occult art – harder to divine than tea leaves and impossible for mortals to do even passably well! (Palmer, P., 1998, p. 1.)

Your Guides

James H. Korn, Ph.D. (Jim)

I received my Ph.D. from Carnegie-Mellon University (1965) in physiological psychology. I served on the faculty at CMU until 1974, when I came to Saint Louis University as department chair. The introductory course and History of Psychology are the courses I taught most often, but I also taught courses in adult development, program evaluation, and qualitative research methods.

My commitment to developing teachers began during the tumultuous days of the late 1960s. Now I am retired. For most of my career I have been actively involved in the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, serving as President in 1988-89. My hobbies are gardening, walking, reading, and playing with my grandchildren.

Mary Stephen, Ph.D.

I received my Ph.D. from Saint Louis University (1997) in foundations of education, following earlier degrees and extensive graduate work in mathematics and computer science. In 2000, after over 30 years of teaching mathematics, computer science and instructional technology in higher education, I joined the staff of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence at Saint Louis University where I had the opportunity to work with faculty members interested in expanding their teaching expertise especially in the area of technology integration, and with graduate students pursuing the Center's Certificate in University Teaching Skills. I retired as director of the Center in 2011, and I am currently a part-time visiting professor at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville where I am involved in research on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

(STEM) education. My hobbies include travel, reading and grandchildren's sporting events.

Jason Sikorski, Ph.D.

I received my Ph. D. from Auburn University (2005) in clinical psychology, where I received stellar training in how to be a decent teacher from one of the world's best, Dr. William Buskist. I am a proud past winner of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology McKeachie Early Career Award (2004). Yet, I am most proud of being the first chairperson of the Graduate Student Association for beginning teachers within the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, which has grown considerably over the last decade. My hobbies include: watching baseball, hiking, reading, and sleep. Of note, I am proud to have worked on this volume with Jim, who truly represents a "teacher of teachers."

Using this Guide

This is a Guide, not a textbook. It differs from the typical textbook in several ways. We include many learning activities that ask you to stop reading and do something, usually writing, but also communicating with others and searching other sources. We provide links to most of these sources.

You can work through this Guide from this first unit to the last unit just as you would in a live course. We also envision the Guide as an Emergency Room for instructors who have been assigned a course to teach that begins next week and who have had no formal preparation for teaching. Unfortunately this happens all too often. If you need an ER, you might jump into Unit 3 on Planning a Course to find suggestions for what to do on the first day.

While you can work through this Guide on your own, we suggest you find people who will work with you one-on-one as you work through the units. In the first activity, we suggested that you find a friend to serve as surrogate classmate. You also may want to seek an experienced teacher to be your mentor. This person can help you reflect on your learning activities and discuss teaching issues with you. She or he may also be able to provide you with practice teaching opportunities.

We recommend that you find a textbook that will serve as a supplement to this guide and provides more in-depth information on essentials for beginning teachers. Following are a few books that we recommend:

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Contains a variety of practical suggestions based on extensive research on strategies used by excellent college teachers to prepare to teach, design courses and class sessions, select teaching strategies and assess students.

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. (3rd edition).
Bershire, England: Open University Press.

Emphasizes designing outcomes with learning activities to achieve the outcomes, and assessment techniques. Includes sections on teaching large and small classes.

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching*. (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Each of the 61 brief chapters in this book has quick tips on all aspects of teaching. It's particularly good when you need a quick fix.

Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences*. San Francisco: John Wiley.

Provides tools to help develop courses that focus on designing significant student learning experiences. Includes information on using standard teaching strategies and introduces some new suggestions for teaching.

Forsyth, D. R. (2003). *The professors guide to teaching: Psychological principles and practices*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

This book is especially strong in providing research data to support the advice.

Goss Lucas, S., & Bernstein, D. A. (2005). *Teaching psychology: A step by step guide*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

You will find lots of useful checklists and forms, and a supporting CD.

Huston, T. (2010). *Teaching what you don't know*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Provides strategies for dealing with challenge of efficiently preparing to teach a new course, appearing credible, and practical suggestions for engaging and assessing student learning.

Lang, J. M. (2008). *On course: A week by week guide to your first semester of college teaching*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Includes a variety of practical, concrete teaching strategies and discussion of issues that may confront you when teaching for the first time. Appendix includes a sample syllabus.

McKeachie, W. J., & Svinicki, M. (2006). *Teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. (12th edition). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Provides a good combination of tips and research on teaching. After twelve editions over almost 60 years it must be good.

Online Resources

We will refer you to various on line sources as you go through the units in this Guide. A few of these resources include:

[Society for the Teaching of Psychology \(STP\)](#), Division Two of the American Psychological Association. You do not have to be a member to access most of the items you will find.

[The American Psychological Society](#) includes a section on “Teaching Psychology,” and within that section, “Teaching Tips.”

[The Higher Education Academy](#) from the United Kingdom offers a variety of discipline specific resources for teaching.

[IDEA Center’s Idea Papers](#) combined with [POD-IDEA Center Notes on Instruction](#) contain many practical suggestions for teaching and information on research related to teaching.

[MERLOT](#) contains a wealth of peer-reviewed online teaching and learning materials submitted by faculty members in a variety of disciplines.

[Narratives Supporting Excellent Teaching \(NEXT\)](#) contains hypothetical case studies on a variety of challenges in teaching along with strategies for addressing these teaching issues and related links for more information. While it focuses on engineering education, the challenges and strategies apply to any discipline.

[Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education](#) is an excellent online, peer-reviewed journal that contains many articles on strategies for effective classroom practice contributed by faculty and students working together.

Finally, each of us will be available to answer questions and discuss teaching issues via e-mail:

kornjh@earthlink.net

stephenm@acm.org

sikorskijaf@mail.ccsu.edu