

Annotating a Text

1. Read everything at least twice.

The first time, read quickly to get a sense of what the text is about. Look for important ideas or content divisions. Think about the author's motivation and intended audience.

The second time, read carefully. Mark concepts, definitions, examples, details or lists that you think are:

- inconsistent,
- interesting, or
- important.

Mark anything that is unfamiliar and keep going.

2. Begin to annotate. Pick up a pen, pencil, or post-it notes.

- Sum up important ideas in your own words
- Note relationships between concepts (cause & effect, comparison, contrast)
- Add your own examples
- Circle confusing or unknown words or phrases to look up later
- Note passages that you don't understand with a ?
- Write questions you have for your instructor or to investigate later
- Note passages that seem inconsistent
- Note passages that generate a strong positive or negative response
- Mark repetitions or any other signals
- Mark potential test questions with a **TQ**

Devise and refine a marking system that works for you.

Think about the connections between lectures, this text and other texts you have read.

What is Annotation?

Annotation is summing up information in a text or article by writing brief key points in the margins. It is an active reading strategy that improves comprehension and is the beginning of the learning and remembering processes. It requires that the student take time to understand what he or she is reading and then put it into his or her own words.

Students who annotate their texts read to make meaning rather than read just to complete the assignment. Annotation requires the students to think about what they are reading because they know they have to put it in their own words. Though annotation takes more time than the passive activity of highlighting, students actually spend less time studying because they are actually learning the material while they are annotating.

There are many benefits for annotation:

- Provides a purpose for reading
- Improves comprehension
- Offers an immediate test of understanding
- Increases concentration
- Seldom necessitates a reread of the material
- Creates a study tool

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Handout developed by Barbara Kirkwood from:
Simpson, M. L., & Nist, S. L. (1990). Textbook
annotation: An effective and efficient study strategy
for college students. *Journal of Reading*, 34(2), 122-129.