

Annotating a Text

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.

Benefits of 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

Ways to Annotate 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 and begin to make your 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, noting passages that you don't understand with a ?
 - Write down questions you have for your instructor or that you want to investigate later.
 - Note passages that seem inconsistent or generate a strong positive or negative response.
 - Mark repetitions or any other signals, and mark potential test questions with a TQ.
 - Think about the connections between lectures, this text and other texts you have read.

As you work, you can devise and refine a marking system that works for you.