

The WRITING CENTER

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Annotating a Text

What is Annotation?

An annotation is a note or comment added to the margins of a text or an article that briefly summarizes or contextualizes key information. This type of annotation is different than an annotated bibliography; annotating a text is an active reading strategy that improves comprehension, and is the beginning of the learning and remembering processes. It requires the student to take time to understand what they are reading, and put the information into their own words.

Students who annotate their texts are reading to make meaning rather than reading just to complete an assignment. Annotation requires the student think about what they are reading and then translate the information into their own words. Though annotating a text takes more time than the passive activity of highlighting key words and phrases, students actually spend less time studying if they annotate because they are learning the material while they read.

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.