

Annotating a Text

What?

Coming from the word "note," annotating means to create notes on the sheet of paper you are reading, but it is much more than simply highlighting. Annotating is actively engaging with the material- summarizing, questioning, expanding, as well as labeling and chunking information. A well-annotated text goes beyond highlighting and even note taking, it's **note making**.

If you are reading to learn, then your brain needs to be constantly processing the ideas in the text and outputting it in some way to construct your understanding. It is a far better use of your time to slowly read a text once, making notes as you go than to read it twice through without. Put into numbers, a person typically remembers only 10% of what he or she reads, but **up to 70% of what they write**.

Why?

.....

Content

Before reading, know the reason why you are reading the text.

For a text with known parts, multi-colored highlighting can be effective:

- **Causes or effects** of an issue
- **Before and after** characteristics of a major event
- **Similarities and differences** between items
- **Characterizations** of a topic
- **Background and various solutions** to a problem
- **Two sides** of a debated topic

Or, you could need to answer a question that the text answers:

- Read the **introduction**, which always previews the text's main idea and importance
- Ask the **person** giving you the text for what you should be reading
- Check the **end of the text** for any questions provided

Comprehension

While reading, make notes on items that cause you to think.

Note any questions you have about the text:

- **Circle** any unknown words and define in the margin
- Put a **question mark** next to confusing parts
- Write a **question** in the margin to ask later

Also, note your reactions:

- Mark positive / negative reactions with **plus / minus** symbols
- Mark best or exceptional items with **stars** or **exclamation marks**

Organization

While reading, divide up the text into smaller pieces.

While reading, chunk various parts of the text:

- **Box or bracket** paragraphs or parts ("yes" side of an issue)
- **Number** paragraphs to match their content (4 different solutions)
- **Label or summarize** paragraphs' topics in the margin
- **Summarize** the text in a single sentence at the end

