

Annotating Texts

Compiled with information from the [University of North Carolina](#)

What is annotation?

Annotation can be:

- A systematic summary of the text that you create within the document
- A key tool for close reading that helps you uncover patterns, notice important words, and identify main points
- An active learning strategy that improves comprehension and retention of information

Why annotate?

- Isolate and organize important material
- Identify key concepts
- Monitor your learning as you read
- Make exam prep effective and streamlined
- Can be more efficient than creating a separate set of reading notes

How do you annotate?

- ★ Summarize key points in your own words.
- ★ Use headers and words in bold to guide you
- ★ Look for main ideas, arguments, and points of evidence
- ★ Notice how the text organizes itself. Chronological order? Idea trees? Etc.
- ★ Circle key concepts and phrases

Tips:

- Think: What words would it be helpful to look-up at the end?
- For Academic Texts: What terms show up in lecture? When are different words used for similar concepts? Why?
- When done reading: Write brief comments and questions in the margins
- Be as specific or broad as you would like—use these questions to activate your thinking about the content
- Use abbreviations and symbols
 - ◆ Try ? when you have a question or something you need to explore further
 - ◆ Try ! When something is interesting, a connection, or otherwise worthy of note
 - ◆ Try * For anything that you might use as an example or evidence when you use this information.
 - ◆ Ask yourself what other system of symbols would make sense to you.

Highlight/underline

Highlight or underline, but mindfully. Highlight information, words, events of consequence, not everything. A book/chapter that has been entirely highlighted doesn't help when reviewing information. If it's all important; nothing is important.

What are the most important takeaways?

1. Annotation is about increasing your engagement with a text
2. Increased engagement, where you think about and process the material then expand on your learning, is how you achieve mastery in a subject
3. As you annotate a text, ask yourself: how would I explain this to a friend?
4. Put things in your own words and draw connections to what you know and wonder about

Spending the time to annotate on the front end does two important things:

- It saves you time later when you're studying. Your annotated notes will help speed up exam prep, because you can review critical concepts quickly and efficiently.
- It increases the likelihood that you will retain the information after the course is completed. This is especially important when you are supplying the building blocks of your mind and future career.

Works consulted:

Simpson, M., & Nist, S. (1990). Textbook annotation: An effective and efficient study strategy for college students.

Press, F. (2004). *Understanding earth* (4th ed). New York: W.H. Freeman. 208-210.

