

How to Annotate a Text

What is Annotation?

Annotation is the process of adding notes to a text as you read. It helps you **engage actively** with the material, making it easier to understand, remember, and review later. It can be questions, comments, or other notes. **You can think of it as having a conversation with the text.**

Why Annotate?

- **Enhance Understanding:** Helps you grasp key concepts and ideas.
- **Efficient Review:** Makes it quicker to study important information.
- **Prepare for Class:** Generates ideas and questions for discussion.

Steps to Annotate:

1. Highlight Key Points:
 - Mark important ideas, terms, or phrases that stand out.
 - Be selective to avoid over-highlighting. Everything on the page should NOT be highlighted.
2. Summarize Main Ideas:
 - Write brief summaries in your own words in the margins. Summaries should be no more than 3 sentences.
 - Focus on the text's main arguments and evidence.
3. Ask Questions:
 - Jot down any questions or thoughts that arise as you read.
 - These can be about confusing parts or connections to other ideas.
 - **The minimum number of questions per annotation assignment is at least 2.** If the questions are basic questions that you can look up yourself, you need to do this and annotate what that means in the margins. Basic questions do not count.
 - Annotations shouldn't consist of only questions. I've had students not summarize or make analytical comments, instead, each annotation is a question. This is not acceptable. Your questions should be reserved for clarifications, reteaching, or asking critical questions about the content.
 - Do not ask me questions about my opinions or how I feel about a topic. I will not give you my opinion. Instead, I would turn the question back to you. How do you feel about the topic or what is your opinion?
4. Make Comments:
 - Note your reactions, whether you agree or disagree.
 - Connect ideas to lectures, other readings, or personal experiences. These are analytical comments. It shows that you're analyzing the text and connecting it to what you already know, what is going on in the world, and what you might have learned in prior classes or lectures.
5. Use Symbols:
 - Create a system (e.g., "?" for questions, "!" for important points).
 - Use these consistently to organize your thoughts.

Example Annotations:

- Main Idea: "Global warming impacts..." (highlight)

- Comment: “Connects to last week’s lecture.”
- Question: “How does this relate to economic policy?”

Remember:

The goal is to engage with the text, so your annotations should help you think critically and make studying more effective! NEVER, in my class, should AI be used to help you annotate your readings. Annotations are to help me gauge YOUR understanding of the content—not a robot’s understanding of the content.

Source:

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Learning Center. (n.d.). *Annotating texts*.
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/annotating-texts/>