ANNOTATING TEXTBOOKS

Annotating is a way of marking your textbook by taking key points from the text. In addition to underlining or highlighting, you should annotate because it will help you **understand** and **remember** information. Publishers often include wide margins in college textbooks to encourage students to annotate.

If you only underline or highlight, you may limit your learning because they can be done without thinking very actively. However, to annotate you must **think actively**. When you annotate, you're not only reading; you're already **beginning to <u>study</u>** the material. This is why annotating is more effective.

Why else should you annotate?

1. **Annotating increases your concentration**. It forces you to think about and clarify the writer's ideas.

2. **Annotating makes you a more active reader**. Your mind can't wander as much so you'll remain more focused.

3. **Annotating encourages you to distinguish between the main ideas and supporting details**. When you differentiate between key concepts and supporting details, you better understand the key concepts.

4. **Annotating helps you remember important information**. When you rephrase material in your own words, you're putting it into your long-term memory.

5. **Annotating helps you monitor your learning**. It forces you to select, reflect, and evaluate what you're reading.

6. **Annotating allows quick review of important ideas**. When you look through your textbooks, you'll be able to quickly identify important information. This helps you study for tests, participate in class discussions, and write papers.

7. **Annotating provides reference material for future classes**. It's easy to refer back to information already learned when you need it for writing papers or preparing presentations.

8. **Annotating makes it easier to locate information during an open-book test**.

How do you annotate?

1. Always **read with a pen in hand**.

2. **Annotate what's most important**:
    o Main ideas (summarize stated main ideas; try to write out implied main ideas)
    o Definitions (indicate with **dfn** in the margin)
    o Examples (indicate with **ex** in the margin)
    o Lists of reason or characteristics (number them; perhaps also summarize each one)
    o Concepts that show cause and effect relationships, or similarities and differences (use arrows to show the connections)
    o Summary statements (paraphrase in the margin and circle)
    o Unfamiliar words (put a box around them, or underline with a red pen)
    o Signal words (circle them)

3. **Annotate one section at a time**. Survey the section first, and then read all the information under the heading. Then determine what's important to write in the margin.

4. **Annotate <u>before</u> you underline or highlight**. This will reduce the amount you'll need to underline or highlight.

5. **Annotate in your own words**, using as few words as possible. Don't just copy. Think about what you're reading, and accurately paraphrase it. This helps you monitor your learning. If you can't write the information in your own words, then you probably don't understand it.

6. **Turn headings into questions.** When you find the answer to your question, place parentheses around the answer and write **imp** in the margin.

7. **Number items in a list**. Write out a brief heading for that list.

8. Put **?** to indicate **information that you do not understand**.

9. Put ⇨ next to **information that may be important** (but you're not sure)

10. **Mark important ideas** with ***** or **imp** in the margin.

11. **Use numbers for lists and sequences**.

12. Put **T** next to items that are **likely to be on the test**.

13. Put   **SUM** next to a **summary statement**

14. **Use abbreviations and symbols**. Develop a personalized marking system that's meaningful to you.

15. Write **comments in the margins** to help you **connect** the material with instructor comments and your own experience.

16. **Re-read** any parts that you did not understand.