Annotation

What is annotation? Annotation is the process of making notes / markings in a text that students are reading for class. Note: If you don’t want to write on your textbook, you can always use post-its, a notebook, or a word processing program

Why do students annotate?

- To remember material longer
- To find material more easily
- To stay focused on the reading
- To prepare for exams/essays
- To identify key terms/definitions
- To help visualize difficult concepts
- To ask and answer questions

What should I look for?

1. Information the author thinks is important
   Your first step in annotating is to find information the author thinks is important. If you can identify that information, you know that you can comprehend the text. When you go to class, you’ll be able to complete a quiz about the text or answer the instructor’s questions. Look for the following clues...
   - Definitions and Illustrations: If the author takes the time to define or illustrate a term, it is probably important.
   - Repetition: If the author repeats an idea, it is probably important.
   - They tell you: Occasionally, the author will tell you the information is important. Titles, subtitles, and section headers
   - Images
   - Bold or italicized text
   - Change in font color
   - Lists (either bullet point or numbered)
   - Call out boxes
   - Summaries (may appear at the beginning or end of a chapter)
   - Sample assignments/quiz questions

2. Information the reader thinks is important
   Your second step in annotating is finding information that you think is important. This will help you develop a response to the author’s ideas. Some college-level assignments will require you to do more than understand an author’s ideas. They will ask you to present your reaction to those ideas. By annotating the information you think is important, you’ll be able to craft your response more easily.

Pay attention to the following: Information that you have an emotional reaction to (whether the reaction is positive or negative)
   - Information that you agree or disagree with
   - Information directly related to your assignment
   - Information that connects to material you already know or your past experiences
3. Any questions you may have: Your third step in annotating is to make note of any questions you have. Asking questions will help keep you focused as you read because you will be looking for the author to provide an answer. Even if the author does not provide an answer, you can either look up the information in another source or ask the question during class time. This will ensure that you have all the information you need to understand the reading thoroughly.

**How should I annotate?** Try the following techniques...

- Don’t just highlight: It will be easy to forget why you made the highlighted marks
- Do write notes in words/phrases: This will help you find important information later
- Circle unfamiliar vocabulary: Once you are done reading, you can look those words up in the dictionary
- Write brief summaries at the end of chapters or major sections: This will help you remember what occurred in that part of the text
- Draw: Sometimes, it is easier to understand concepts by drawing them out. Consider drawing visual materials, such as molecular structure or the orbits of planets.

**Sample Annotation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the paragraph about?</th>
<th>Passage: “Why Millennials &amp;%#@! Love Science”</th>
<th>How do you respond to the paragraph?</th>
<th>Questions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millennials + technology Exposure to advanced ideas Not always deep</td>
<td>For Millennials, technology is simultaneously an inspiration and a medium for innovation. “Through technology, students are getting exposed to scientific ideas and concepts that 30 years ago would have required a visit to the research university or reading a journal. And that early exposure makes [the ideas] more accessible,” said Kristine Johnson, a professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan who has published several articles about Millennials as teachers and students. That doesn’t mean Millennials are necessarily delving into this information very deeply, she noted. “It’s easy to learn about these things on a shallow level, it inspires admiration for some scientific discoveries and may do so for Millennials in the future.”</td>
<td>My experience is similar. I learn about science by watching Cosmos, which is interesting but not as complex as a science book.</td>
<td>What does “delving” mean? Should we be concerned that Millennials are learning at a shallow level?</td>
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