

ANNOTATING A TEXT

What: *Annotating* is a structured way of marking up a text to make it more manageable, and it is a way to help the reader understand what a text is about.

Why:

- Annotating helps readers focus closely on a text, become more engaged, and increase their understanding of a text.
- It also makes it easier to go back and find information in the text (good for answering questions, gathering evidence, citing sources, studying for tests, forming arguments).
- Annotating can help people read faster and more accurately because it helps readers identify essential information
- *It's one of the things adults, college students, professionals, and expert readers do!*

How: There are numerous ways a reader can annotate a text, depending on type and structure of the text, the preferences and abilities of the reader, and the purpose for reading a text. See below.

Ways Readers Might Annotate:

Identify Key Content Area Vocabulary Words: Content specific words that are *essential* to understanding the reading (*restriction enzyme, DNA, chromosome, plasmid*). Draw a box around these, or highlight a specific color.

Identify Difficult or Important Words: Students choose these words. They may be unfamiliar or difficult words, or they may be words students think are important (*technique, splice, replicate, synthesize*). Draw a triangle over these words or highlight in a different color.

Sketch Examples of Words, Concepts, or Processes: In the margins, sketch visual representations of vocabulary words, or draw images to represent an important idea, a complex concept, or what a text is mostly about.

Writing the Gist: The gist is what a text or section of text is mostly about. It is a brief, 1-2 sentence statement. Write the gist in the margin next to the text.

J. Rolince and A. Masterleo, Partnership For Literacy Learning

Works Referenced

Jolene Zywica, K. G. (2008). Annotating to Support Learning in the Content Areas: Teaching and Learning Science. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 155-164.

Identify Sequence in a Procedure or a Complex Set of Steps: Use numbers to identify specific steps in a procedure, or draw arrows to show how one step leads to another. Draw a flow chart or diagram in the margins next to the text.

Circle Headings and Subheadings: Headings and subheadings identify major points in a reading. They give clues on what the next section is going to be about and show how a topic might be changing.

Identify Main Ideas: The main idea is the most important concept. It may be a sentence, part of a sentence, or the combination of two or more sentences. Use a specific highlighter color or double underline main ideas.

Identify Evidence/Supporting Details: Evidence or supporting details back up the main idea. Use a different color highlighter or single underline to identify supporting details.

Identify Definitions Within The Text: Definitions for vocabulary words are often provided in the text. Write *def* in the margin or space next to or above the definition of words.

Identify Transition Words or Phrases: Transitions indicate a change is occurring. Words (*however, first, next*) or phrases (*on the other hand, in 1998*) indicate the subject, date, or condition is about to change. Place an * above transition words.

Identify Conclusions: Conclusions are usually found at the end of a paragraph or section. They summarize the text that came before. Not every text will provide conclusions, but *concl.* Can be written next to or above conclusions in the text.

Identify Inferred Information: An inference is part of a text that assumes the reader already knows something or has already learned about a topic. Write *inf* above or next to inferred information.

Locate Formulas or Equations: Draw an = next to or above important equations or formulas when they appear in a text. This will make it easier to find these when answering questions or solving problems.

Identify Confusing Information and Pose Questions: Place a ? in the margin or space next to any section of a text that is confusing or unclear. Rule: any ? has to also have a question that can be posed to a teacher or peer (*I don't get it* or *I'm confused* are NOT questions).

J. Rolince and A. Masterleo, Partnership For Literacy Learning

Works Referenced

Jolene Zywicki, K. G. (2008). Annotating to Support Learning in the Content Areas: Teaching and Learning Science. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 155-164.