



Reading & Annotation Tips

Undergraduate Tutoring Center | University of Vermont

Active reading helps you stay engaged, understand material on a deeper level, and have an easier time remembering what you learn. Create a simple system for marking your text so you can review your thinking later. Use the strategies below, or modify them to create your own approach!

Before You Read

1. Preview the Text

Scan opening paragraphs, headings and subheadings. Review bullet points and lists, and images, charts, or graphs. This quick overview helps you identify the main ideas before you've begun reading.

While You Read

2. Mark Key Vocabulary & Concepts

Underline any unfamiliar words, important terms, and new concepts.

3. Connect Related Ideas

Draw arrows or lines between ideas that relate to one another.

4. Number Important Information

- Steps in a process
- Items in a list
- Supporting details or examples

5. Identify Questions

Put a question mark next to confusing information. Elaborate on your question in the margins, or on sticky notes.

6. Note your Disagreement

If you encounter a section of the text that you disagree with, note it in margin or on a sticky note, and explain why.

7. Highlight with Purpose

Highlight only the most important information. If helpful, use different colors for different types of information such as main ideas, evidence, or vocabulary.

After You Read

8. Talk It Out

Explain the reading to a classmate, roommate, friend, or study partner. Try to identify 1–3 key takeaways without looking at your notes.

9. Review Before Class

Spend a few minutes reviewing your annotations, notes, or sticky tabs before class. During a lecture, think about how that day's content connects to what you read.

10. Quiz Yourself

Practice recalling key ideas from memory before checking your notes.

Bonus Strategy: Listen While You Read

11. Use Read & Write

All UVM students have free access to Read & Write, a tool that can convert digital text and PDFs into audio. Listening while reading can help improve focus, comprehension, and retention. To learn more about Read & Write, visit the website of the Office of Accessibility Services.

REMEMBER!

The goal of annotation is not to mark everything. The goal of annotation is to record your thinking while you read and allow for an easier time reviewing the reading in the future.