

## Making Annotations

Annotations are an important part of active reading because it makes you really think about what you are reading and allows you to interact with the information. Yes, it can be annoying and time consuming but there are ways to elevate it or make it more enjoyable. Reading a book is more relaxing if you aren't required to rhetorically analyze the author's words, find figurative language, or identify the theme. Sometimes we say that it messes with our "flow" when we read but it is vital to understanding the true message of articles, books, and other texts.

The most important thing to remember about annotating, though, is do it in a way that will serve your purpose or reason for annotating. Simply annotating an article so that you can refer back to the key information will look very different from annotations that are trying to identify the main themes of a novel.

First, let's dive into annotating an article or a work of nonfiction. Because the purpose of texts like these are usually to inform or persuade, you need to take notes of what the author's message is and how they support it. Some well-known techniques used for this are highlighting the author's claims and key terms. Using different colors in order to indicate the different claims that the author is making and the evidence that they use to support it are great ways to organize and keep track of those key points. It is also important to find your own system of either writing very short summaries or an analysis of the information in the margins so when you refer back to it, you will be able to look at your interpretation instead of the author's words. Some people find that underlining the key terms and concepts used in the article helps them understand the message as well. This highlighting of the author's explicit claims and key concepts is important for if you need to refer to the article later.

Next, the strategies for annotating a novel can differ greatly from a work of nonfiction. You usually need to look a little deeper into the text to find the themes of the book as the themes of a book are never explicitly stated. You can identify symbols and find figurative language that

the author may use to further their point. It is important to look for connections to the real world or insights that any characters make that can apply in your life as well. However, it can get tricky if you are not given much guidance on the message that the author is trying to send. Using websites like Sparknotes in addition to reading can help guide you through the motifs of the book and show you what you should be looking for. It can also be useful to understand the background and context of the book like the time period because this may explain why certain events happen.

Before stressing about annotating, first think about what the purpose of your annotations are. If you stick to annotating in ways that will help you understand and learn from that specific type of text, it will be efficient and straightforward.