
How to Read Before You Write

By Marina, Mikayla, and Nina



Introductions!

Mikayla (she/her/hers): sophomore, American Studies and Black Studies major and English minor

Marina (she/her/hers): sophomore, undeclared politics major and undeclared education minor

Nina (she/her/hers): senior, sociology major, history minor

Questions to ask before reading

Source

Who is the author?

Type

What genre is the piece?



Time

What year was the piece published?

Intention

What will you be using this reading for?

What are you reading for?



Skimming

Reading for the main points with an emphasis on thesis, topic sentences, and conclusion



Analyzing

Asking questions of the text with the intention of making larger claims and connections



Annotating

Making notes within the text with main themes, questions, and important quotes



Rereading

Some pieces need to be read a second or third time. This is normally with the intent of finding specific answers.

How to prepare for annotating



1st

Space

Annotating can be a difficult task. Ask yourself where you focus best



2nd

Tools

Are you reading on a computer or in print? Do you have annotating tools?



3rd

Time

Annotating takes time. Make sure you set yourself up for success by giving yourself enough time.



4th

Focus

Annotating can be difficult. Make sure you are in the right mental space to begin reading.

The dos and don'ts of annotating



Find a space that works best for you



Have the tools you need in order to successfully annotate



Read curiously and analytically



Don't annotate in a chaotic and stressful environment



Don't be unprepared. Think back to what you needed for annotating



Don't read without actively engaging with the text

What is the purpose of annotating?

Conversation

Your annotations should be a conversation with the text, responding to, questioning, and commenting on the content

Engagement

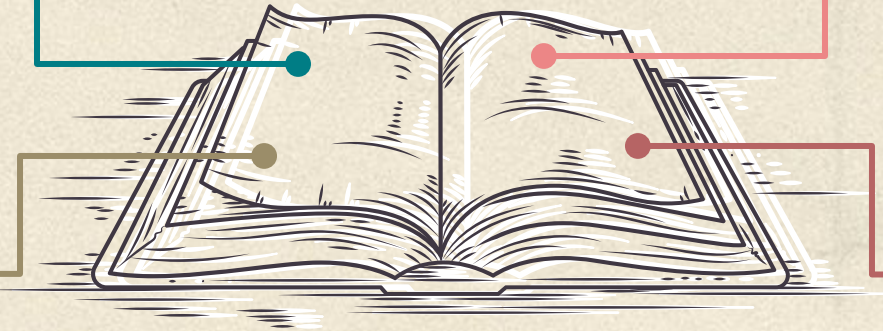
The larger purpose is to increase your engagement with the text– it forces you to think more deeply and make connections about the content

For you!

Your notes are for yourself, you should figure out what works best for you! Make notes for yourself for later.

Connections

You should be making connections to other content from the class and your other knowledge from other classes, readings, or life experience



Helpful Methods: When and Why you should be using them

**Highlight
or
underline**



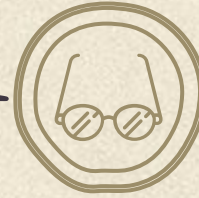
This should NOT be the only way you annotate– use it together with these other steps!

**Take
notes**



Write comments or questions for you to come back to!

Summarize



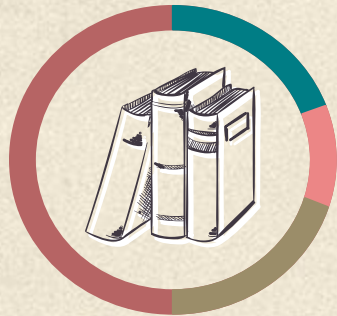
Summarize each paragraph or section so you have something to look back on easily!

**Note
useful or
important
quotes**



Take out the 'money quotes' – we will get into this more later!

Note taking –what to think about



What are the main points of the entire article and smaller sections? Try putting them in your own words or think about how you would explain it to a friend!



Questions! Are you confused on anything? Make notes of areas to ask your professor about or look it up and write down the explanation for yourself.



How does this relate to the content of the class or the writing you will be working on? Focus on the relevant pieces!



What do you think? Scholarly writing is a conversation, how would you respond to the author's ideas in a discussion?

Figure out what works for you!

Paper or by hand

Do you prefer marking up in the margins? Many people print out readings or use a device like an ipad.



Digital

There are many helpful online tools for annotating, like commenting on google docs, highlight features, and digital sticky notes



Separate Notes

This typically takes longer than marking up on a computer or in the margins, but can help organize your thoughts and important take-aways or sections, especially when preparing to write a paper.



Identifying 'Money' Quotes

**What is the message
of this quote?**

**How does this quote
help convey the
overall message of the
text?**

**Does this quote support
an argument I want to
make?**

Supporting a Claim With Evidence

- How do details of the selected passage support your argument?
- Pay attention to rhetorical devices - how do they help to “show” what you are arguing about the overall importance of the passage?

Some rhetorical devices to focus on:

- Language (word choice, sentence structure, repetition)
- Imagery
- Symbolism



To Quote or Not to Quote?

- Only use quotes when the author's words are absolutely essential
- Quotes do not speak for themselves - your job as a writer is to convey what you find significant about a quote
- Find 'money quotes' that best support your argument

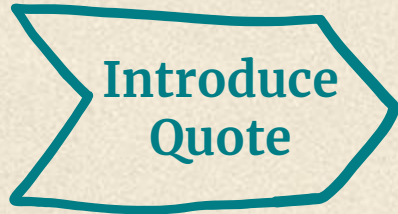
Ways of using evidence without quoting:

- Paraphrasing: rephrase the text in your own words
- Summarizing: condense the text in your own words



Integrating Quotes into a Paragraph

Provide context, name the author, introduce what you are trying to prove – there are many ways to set up your evidence!



Choose wisely! Rule of thumb: the best quotes are between five words and three lines on a page.

Include a citation immediately following the quote – check your citation style guidelines!



Several sentences communicating **your** interpretation of the quote and how it supports your argument

Templates for Integrating Quotes

- X states, “_____.”
- According to X, “_____.”
- In their book, _____, X maintains that “_____.”
- X disagrees when they write, “_____.”
- Basically, X is warning that...
- In other words, X believes....
- X’s point is that...

How do claims of the text connect to your own? Why do you find this quote to be worth quoting?



References

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *"They Say / I Say": the Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. W.W. Norton and Company, 2018.

Now it's time to try some of the reading annotating strategies introduced in this workshop! Make a copy of this linked graphic organizer: <https://bit.ly/3ELwI3j>



Graphic Organizer Directions

Use the linked graphic organizer to organize your quotes, responses, and working thesis statement. Think back to the 3 different sections that were reviewed during the workshop:

- 1.) preparing to read your texts.
- 2.) annotating your texts with a clear purpose.
- 3.) developing your quotes and annotations with the purpose of developing a working thesis.

If you are not yet preparing to write an essay and your primary goal is to understand the reading to engage in class discussion, you can skip writing down your working thesis on the top of page 2.

Thank you for Coming!

Visit bit.ly/oxywc for more resources or to schedule an appointment with us.

Follow @oxywritingcenter!