
CLOSE ANNOTATION HANDOUT

Use the strategies outlined in this handout
to make your margin notes more meaningful to you!

1. First, why are you reading?

If you're reading to learn more about the subject, then your margin notes should:

Summarize a sentence or paragraph.

Paraphrase a sentence or paragraph.

Outline central ideas.

Define key words and terms.

If you're reading to answer a prompt, then your margin notes should address that specific question. For example:

Analyze: take notes that break down the text into understandable parts.

Evaluate: take notes that determine the value, amount, importance or effectiveness of the claims within the text.

2. Next, make sure you annotate WHILE you're reading, not after.

Taking margin notes while you read can help you avoid the trap of "zoning out" in the middle of a text. If you're already an excellent reader who doesn't zone out, strong annotation can help make the follow-up assignment to the reading even easier.

3. Don't give yourself "busywork".

Strong annotation is thoughtful, purposeful and targeted. You don't have to fill the margins with excessive notes. Instead, set a goal of 2 to 3 thoughtful annotations per page.

4. Finally, review your annotations once completed and use them on subsequent assignments.

The power of effective margin notes can be seen when you use them to help you complete more complicated follow-up work. Whether you're writing an analytical essay on the text or prepping for an exam on the material, don't forget to refer back to your annotations.