

How to Annotate Articles and Essays

1. **Circle unknown words.** As you read, circle each word you come across that is unfamiliar. You may need to come back and reread the sentences before and after the word to get the meaning of the word. If you don't figure it out, look it up. Write the definition.
2. **Mark definitions that are given in the text.** Highlight or circle sentences that provide you with a definition. It is useful to write "def" in the margin so you can locate the definition quickly. Also mark sentences that provide examples by marking an "X" next to the sentence.
3. **Place a check or star next to important passages.** This is extremely helpful when taking a test that requires you to read a passage, because the questions that follow the reading will most likely refer back to these points.
4. **Make notes to yourself in the margins.** As you read, write any questions or comments that crop up in your mind in the margin next to the passage.
5. **Connect ideas.** Writers provide evidence or reasons to back up their main idea. Every time you come across a piece of data, an example, an illustrating story, or a statistic, underline it. Then connect it with an arrow or a note in the margin to the point it supports.
6. **Summarize your reading.** What is the main idea of the piece? (Write a main idea statement!)

Writing a Main Idea Statement

The goal of _____ in his/her _____
(author) (genre) (title)

is to _____ that _____
(purpose) (position on complex topic)

through the effective use of _____.
(dominant rhetorical appeals/strategies)

Author: The author's name

Genre: What type of writing is it?

Title: The title of the article or essay

Purpose: What is the author trying to do? Inform? Persuade?

Position: What specific idea or position is the author attempting to share or persuade?

Dominant Rhetorical Appeals/Strategies: How is the author sharing or convincing the reader to take the ideas seriously? Pathos, ethos, logos, kairos?