

ANNOTATING A TEXT

In general, highlighter pens are of limited use. Your brain often doesn't process the information, so you'll have to come back to it later and put it into your own words to make sure you've got a handle on it.

A more effective method is to **annotate** or **gloss** a text. Annotating or glossing can take several forms, all of which you can use on one article:

- Note important terms and central ideas.
- Note the **topic**, **thesis**, and **evidence**. See the sections below for discussions of these terms. Again, it will be more effective to rewrite these parts of the text in your own words rather than merely underlining or highlighting them.
- Ask questions about the text. There may be something you don't understand that you'll need to look up in another source or read further to clarify.
- Note how one idea connects, or might connect, to another text or another idea in the same text. Linking what you already know to new information is the best way to learn and remember the new information. Once a concept is clear in your own head, you'll find it much easier to respond to.
- Make a short note in the margin that summarizes quotations that are striking or interesting. You might want to come back and quote or paraphrase these when you begin writing your own essay.
- List your own responses to the text as you read. Especially if the article is long and complex, you might have a hard time remembering your responses once you go to write your own essay. Including your responses to the text in the margins will help you to keep track of your own reactions to the reading.
- Once you've read the essay, write a short note of your impressions of it. Compare the article to others you've read. Note ideas you still don't understand. Note possible "holes" in the argument, or interesting ways you could expand upon or rebut the argument.