



EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

Annotating Text

Definition

Annotating text goes beyond underlining, highlighting, or making symbolic notations or codes on a given text. Annotation includes adding purposeful notes, key words and phrases, definitions, and connections tied to specific sections of text.

Purpose:

Annotating text promotes student interest in reading and gives learners a focused purpose for writing. It supports readers' ability to clarify and synthesize ideas, pose relevant questions, and capture analytical thinking about text. Annotation also gives students a clear purpose for actively engaging with text and is driven by goals or learning target(s) of the lesson.

Through the use of collaborative annotation (annotations made by multiple individuals on the same text), learners are given the opportunity to “eavesdrop on the insights of other readers” (Wolfe & Neuwirth, 2001). Both peers and instructors can provide feedback in order to call attention to additional key ideas and details. Annotating text causes readers to process information at a deeper level and increases their ability to recall information from the text. It helps learners comprehend difficult material and engage in what Probst (1988) describes as, “dialogue with the text.”

Procedure

1. Define the **purpose** for annotation based on learning target(s) and goals. Some examples include:
 - a. Locating evidence in support of a claim
 - b. Identifying main idea and supporting details,
 - c. Analyzing the validity of an argument or counter-argument
 - d. Determining author's purpose
 - e. Giving an opinion, reacting, or reflecting
 - f. Identifying character traits/motivations
 - g. Summarizing and synthesizing
 - h. Defining key vocabulary
 - i. Identifying patterns and repetitions
 - j. Making connections
 - k. Making predictions
2. Model **how** to annotate text:
 - a. Select one paragraph of text from the reading, highlight or underline key word(s) or phrase(s) related to the lesson's purpose, using the “think aloud” strategy to share with students why you marked certain selections of the passage.
 - b. Based on your “think aloud,” model writing an annotated note in the margin, above underlined words and phrases, or to the side of text.
3. Distribute the **materials** students will need, such as books, articles, highlighters, pencils, etc.

4. Practice annotating with students, choosing another paragraph/section of text, reminding them of the **purpose**. Have them highlight, underline, or circle relevant words and phrases in the reading and add annotations. Have students share what they selected and explain the annotation each made. Repeat over several classes or as necessary, working on gradual release toward student independence.

References

- Porter-O'Donnell, C. (May, 2004). Beyond the Yellow Highlighter: Teaching Annotation Skills to Improve Reading Comprehension. *English Journal*, 95: 82-89.
- Probst, R. (Jan., 1988). Dialogue with a Text. *English Journal*, 77(1): 32-38.
- Wolfe, J. L. and Neuwirth, C. M. (2001). From the Margins to the Center: The Future of Annotation. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 15(3): 333-371.