
MARKING THE TEXT

WHAT IS IT?

Marking the text is an active reading strategy that asks students to identify information in the text that is relevant to the reading purpose.

HOW DO I USE IT?

Based on the purpose for reading, students will be marking the text to identify information as they read. They will begin by numbering the paragraphs. Then as they identify information that is relevant to the reading task, they will underline or circle this information, making it easier to locate for notes or discussion. Even though the reading purpose will determine what students will mark, the types of marks will not change. A student's ability to learn and apply a reading strategy relies heavily on the consistency.

WHEN SHOULD I USE IT?

Marking the text is a fundamental strategy that should be used whenever students are asked to read academic texts. When students are asked to read arguments, students should underline the author's claims and circle key terms and names of people who are essential to the argument. While reading passages from a textbook, students should underline information that pertains to the reading purpose and circle names, places, and dates that are relevant to the topic being studied. In the beginning, students should read a text at least once before they go back and mark the text. Once they become comfortable, they can start marking the text during their first read.

WHY SHOULD I USE IT?

When students mark the text purposefully, they are actively engaged in meaning making. To mark texts effectively, students must evaluate an entire passage and begin to recognize and isolate key information. Once the text is marked, students will be able to quickly reference information that pertains to the reading task. Students can also use their markings to

assist in summary writing, to connect ideas presented within the text, or to investigate claims, evidence, or rhetorical devices. Numbering the paragraphs is also essential for class discussions. Once paragraphs are numbered, students can easily direct others to those places where they have found relevant information.

Steps to Marking the Text¹

- 1. Know your purpose for reading!!**
- 2. Number the Paragraphs:** Before you read, number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.
- 3. Circle Key Terms, Names of People, Names of Places, and or Dates:** In order to identify a key term, consider if the word or phrase is... repeated, defined by the author, used to explain or represent an idea, used in an original way, a central concept or idea, relevant to one's reading purpose

Underline an Author's Claims: A claim is an arguable statement or assertion made by the author. Data, facts, or other backing should support an author's assertion.²

Consider the following statements:

- A claim may appear anywhere in the text (beginning, middle, or end)
- A claim may not appear explicitly in the argument, so the reader must infer it from the evidence presented in the text
- Often, an author will make several claims throughout his/her argument
- An author may signal his/her claim, letting you know that is his/her claim

4. Underline Relevant Information: While reading texts, read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task.

¹ Marking the text is a strategy used by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at SDSU.

² For more on this definition see Stephen E. Toulmin's, *The Uses of Argument* (11-13).

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Adapted from AVID Weekly Resources