

HOW TO HIGHLIGHT A TEXT

Whether you are reading a chapter out of your textbook or reading a research article for your next paper, knowing how to highlight and/or mark a set of text is an important skill. Many students end up highlighting too much of a page at a time and so when it comes to revise, the student just ends up re-reading everything. Highlighting and text marking is meant to be a way to pinpoint key concepts, ideas, and words, as well as note information that is unclear or that you have further questions about.

A part of developing your skills in text marking works hand in hand with your ability to critically read text and understand what you have read. Therefore, in developing one skill set, you are concurrently developing the other.

UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF HIGHLIGHTING/TEXT MARKING

WHEN TO DO IT

Very rarely do we understand a specific block of text after reading it once, so we will often re-read the passage to understand the overall meaning and pick out specific points. Highlighting text should be approached in a similar fashion, in which the highlighting should happen concurrently with the second or third re-reading of the passage. During a first read it is difficult to distinguish which information is more important in the grand scheme of the passage, which can lead to highlighting too much of the text.

Highlighting and text marking can also be an important component of the SQ3R reading method, in which after reading a passage, you should be able to note key ideas and terms, so that you can summarize the text you have just read, without having to re-read the entire passage over again.

WHAT TO MARK/HIGHLIGHT

Before jumping into highlighting or marking a text, it is important to understand what you are hoping to get out of reading the specific text. Are you looking for specific stats for a paper, or are you looking for key definitions? Maybe you're reading material to supplement a class, or a novel that will later be included in a group discussion.

Depending on what it is that you are reading and what you are hoping to get out of it, you should be approaching text marking/highlighting slightly differently. Some general tips for tackling any block of text include:

- Highlighting the definition term rather than the entire definition
- Circle unknown words to look up later
- Number a series of events
- Put question marks in the margin of the page beside information you don't understand

ACADEMIC

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

A good rule to keep in mind is to not highlight any more than 25% of the given text. In this particular case, less is more! By bringing your attention to only 25% of the text, it shows the ability to critically read a text and pick out information that really is the most important. Just as in summary writing where you want to be as concise as possible, you don't want to have large blocks of text highlighted.

As per marking text, no more than 25% of the text should be underlined also. If you are reading the material and genuinely having trouble understanding it, it is more than okay to star or place question marks beside the material you are having trouble with. It makes it much easier to find the material again when you approach a friend, TA, or professor.

CONCLUSION

The point of highlighting is to pick out key bits of information so that when studying, you can immediately notice key ideas and concepts. Likewise, text marking is used to star important points, or ask questions about the passage in the margins. A page that is too highlighted or cluttered negates the effect of doing either in the first place; rather than finding key points later, everything on the page suddenly looks important, and so in studying you will just end up re-reading the entire block of text.

REFERENCES

Robinson, F. P. (1970). *Effective study*. New York: Harper & Row.

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Commitments to quality of project and presentation

By signing my name below, I am making a commitment to:

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1. Developing a high quality product that I will be proud of,
2. Creating a product that will make sense, be interesting and informative to my audience.
3. Being neat and careful.
4. Doing my share on time.
5. Doing my best.

Signatures of team members

Commitments to collaborating effectively

check 3 that will be primary goals

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening without interrupting | <input type="checkbox"/> Respecting different opinions, skills & abilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving "I" messages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn-taking & involving everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging & complimenting others | <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Offering assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing and celebrating others' successes | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving negative feedback |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating about difficulties | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing unique talents of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Peacefully resolving conflicts |

Other _____

Commitments to using effective habits of the mind

check 3 that will be primary goals

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using & keeping timelines | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing ideas & being clear | <input type="checkbox"/> Being open minded |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resisting impulsiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Being accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> Being creative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging in challenging tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> Noticing how you & others think | <input type="checkbox"/> Viewing an idea in unusual ways |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persisting during tough times | <input type="checkbox"/> Using information resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting an idea in usual ways |

Other _____