

How to Annotate Sources

When you annotate a source (e.g., an article or a book chapter), you interact with it. You underline key concepts, terms, names, dates, and/or statistical information and interpret this material's significance. You also record your personal reactions to what you read and write down questions that you might ask your professor or classmates later.

Look closely at this sample annotated text on the right. Notice that the student has circled several key terms and ideas and written down observations and questions in the side margins.

How do I annotate?

1. Underline key words, phrases, and sentences. (Tip: Don't underline huge passages. Only underline what you think is the most important and intriguing information, especially information that you might be able to incorporate in your research paper.)
2. Write down the text's major ideas in the margins.
3. Write down your reactions to and questions about the text in the margins.

The image shows a sample of annotated text. The text is from a book or article discussing class differences at Stanford. The student has annotated the text with handwritten notes and underlines. The text is as follows: "Studying at Stanford, I began to think seriously about class differences. To be materially underprivileged at a university where most folks (with the exception of workers) are materially privileged provokes such thought. Class differences were boundaries no one wanted to face or talk about. It was easier to downplay them, to act as though we were all from privileged backgrounds, to work around them, to confront them privately in the solitude of one's room, or to pretend that just being chosen to study at such an institution meant that those of us who did not come from privilege were already in transition toward privilege. To not long for such transition marked one as rebellious, as unlikely to succeed. It was a kind of treason not to believe that it was better to be identified with the world of material privilege than with the world of the working class, the poor. No wonder our working-class parents from poor backgrounds feared our entry into such a world". The student's annotations include: "What kind of boundaries?" in the left margin pointing to "boundaries"; "Is this based on money?" in the right margin pointing to "where most folks"; "Coping & anxiety" in the right margin pointing to "easier to downplay them"; "Quit?" in the left margin with a double-headed arrow pointing to "in transition toward privilege"; and "How do parents' anxieties influence their children?" in the left margin pointing to "feared".

Work Consulted

"Marking Your Textbook." *California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*. California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 2011. Web. 10 August 2011.