Making Annotations: A User's Guide

What is text annotation?

Annotating a text, or marking the pages with notes, is an excellent, if not essential, way to make the most out of the reading you do. Annotations make it easy to find important information quickly when you look back and review a text. They help you familiarize yourself with both the content and organization of what you read. They provide a way to begin engaging ideas and issues directly through comments, questions, associations, or other reactions that occur to you as you read. In all these ways, annotating a text makes the reading process an active one, not just background for writing assignments, but an integral first step in the writing process. Below is a list of all the possible ways you can annotate the text.

1. List or number multiple ideas (causes, effects, reasons, characteristics)
2. Write brief summaries
3. Sketch pictures and charts to explain difficult processes/concepts
4. Give examples
5. Paraphrase difficult or important ideas
6. Ask Questions
7. Define unfamiliar words
8. Form an opinion about the reading (commentary)
9. Break down the argument(s)
10. Predict what will happen next.
11. Make connections to other parts of the book, to other sources of information (i.e. movies, books, events, poems, plays, songs, stories, etc.) and your own life experiences.
12. Describe a new perspective you may now have.
13. Explain the historical context or traditions/social customs that are used in the passage.
14. Note confusing ideas that need clarification
15. For every passage you highlight/underline, you should make a prediction, make a connection, ask a question, give an example, summarize or paraphrase.

What are the tools I will use?

- Post-it Notes: If the text belongs to someone else, use Post-it notes.
- Highlighter: Yellow works best.
- Pencil: Write notes in the margins. Pencil is easy to erase