

How to Annotate a Journal Article

When we annotate a printed text—we speak back to it—we actively enter a conversation with an author. In academia, we annotate texts such as journal articles to engage with authors, to read for comprehension, to retain information, and to share information with our readers. Annotating involves making notes in the body and margins of the article. Annotating is two-fold: read first and annotate last.

What is a scholarly journal article? Scholarly journal articles are written by researchers or experts in a field to share their original research or analyses with other researchers and students. During the publication process, journal articles are peer reviewed. A peer review is an assessment of an article by specialists in the field related to the article's topic (articles are called manuscripts until they are published). A specialist or a peer reviewer determines the validity and quality of the manuscript and identifies errors in it. Moreover, peer reviewers provide suggestions to authors on how to improve their manuscripts. However, peer reviewers do not correct errors or edit manuscripts. Click on the follow link to learn [How to Read a Scholarly Article](#).

How to Annotate a Journal Article

Read abstracts (a summary that helps readers determine whether they should read the entire article)

Review keywords (list of key terms under the abstract)

Read to discover new and important information (on your topic)

Read to support your thesis or hypothesis

Read to answer your research question(s)

Read to address your writing prompt

Read for evidence that supports the author's or authors' thesis or hypothesis

Read to find patterns and important words

Create an annotation key

Highlight the article's title, volume, issue, date, and the name of the journal that published the article

Circle key terms and phrases (know why you circled them)

Underline key terms and phrases (know why you underlined them)

Color-code texts (know why you color-coded the texts)

Define terms

Ask questions in the margins that you cannot answer and generate answers for the ones you can answer

Paraphrase important details (use your own words and cite the source) and paraphrase more than you quote

Identify information that is worthy of quoting (quote sparingly)

Summarize main ideas (use your own words and cite the source)

Cite all sources that "inform your ideas" (*MLA*, 2021, p. 98)

Create a working bibliography (list of sources)

Read each sources' list of Works Cited or References for possible sources for your own research