Organizing Information II: Annotation

Students sometimes feel overwhelmed by the large amount of new information presented in their classrooms and textbooks.

- The first step in handling a large amount of information is to reduce the material to its most important parts, by deciding what is important, less important, and unimportant.
- The second step is to organize the important information so that it is easy to study.

    - For help with the first step, see Organizing Information I – III.
    - For help with the second step, see Organizing Information IV – VI.

Annotation is an active reading process that forces a reader to keep track of his or her comprehension, as well as to react to ideas as they are introduced. Annotation simply consists of marking and making notes in a text. Some types of annotation include:

- Circling unknown words
- Marking and labeling definitions
- Marking and labeling examples
- Numbering lists of ideas, causes, reasons, examples, or events
- Drawing asterisks or stars next to important passages
- Putting question marks next to confusing passages
- Making notes to yourself in the margins
- Drawing arrows between items on the page to show relationships
- Writing comments, noting disagreements and similarities
- Marking and labeling summary statements

Adapted from McWhorter, Kathleen T. Reading Across the Disciplines. 2nd Ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Sample Annotation

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THE KEYS TO REMEMBERING

often combined ex: dates & concepts

You can learn to remember more effectively if you learn and use the four keys described below. Each one helps you to enter information into your long term memory.

1. **Choose to remember**. Be interested. Pay attention. Want to learn and know. What you want is an important part of learning. People learn more effectively and remember more when they are interested and want to learn.

How can you choose to reme
learn before you read or liste
tell yourself with your inner v
Repeat this a few times, and

2. **Visualize or picture in your**
a mental picture or visualizat
each major concept that you
look at it carefully for a few s
able to recall it.

If you are not a visual learner
your mental pictures or imag
photograph, then close your
for a few moments each day

3. **Relate the ideas and inform**
ideas and information you
information, you create a cha
label an information chain or
easy to locate and remember

connect new information to old (like filing)

You can help yourself to relat
organizers, or by outlining.

4. **Repeat what you wish to le**
Even though you've already l
shows that the time you sper
will pay off by making recall

Memory works on 2 levels (1)

focus/attention (What you need to know now) 7-9 items

HOW DOES MEMORY WORK?

Human memory works on two different levels: short term memory and long term memory.

Short term memory

This includes what you focus on in the moment, what holds your attention. Most people can only hold about 7 items of information in short term memory at any given moment, although some can hold up to nine.

Look at Example A. Then look away from your computer screen and try to hold it in your short-term memory.

Example A = 6593028

Most likely, you can hold it as long as you choose. Now follow the same procedure with Example B.

Example B = 573927450621

It's much more difficult, if not impossible, for most people.

Short term memory is exactly what the name says: short term. To learn information so you can retain and recall it, you must transfer it from short term to long term memory.

(2)

What you know/ can recall (part of you)

Long term memory

This includes all the information that you know and can recall. In many ways, it becomes a part of you. Once information becomes a part of your long term memory, you'll have access to it for a long time.

FROM SHORT TERM TO LONG TERM

How do you move information into long term memory? Two of the ways are *rote learning* and *learning through understanding*.

mechanical memorizing ex: alphabet

Rote learning means learning through repetition, mechanically, with little understanding. For example, as a child you probably memorized the alphabet and the multiplication tables by rote.

understanding ex: main ideas & details of a lecture

Learning through understanding involves learning and remembering by understanding the relationships among ideas and information. Rather than using *rote memory*, you use *logical memory* when you learn through understanding. For example, you use logical memory when you remember main ideas and supporting details from a lecture not because you repeat the ideas in your mind, but rather, because you understand them.

Both types of learning and memory are useful and often are used together. For example, in history, you need to relate facts (like dates) which you memorized by rote to your understanding of historical concepts (like the Civil War).

Annotation is a great way to turn a regular old textbook into an "interactive text." All you have to do is keep a pen or pencil handy while you are reading and use it to note your reactions and thoughts as you go through the text. When you go back to review the material you will find that half of your work is already done!