

Marking the Text

“**Marking the Text**” is an active reading strategy that asks students to think critically about their reading. It helps students determine the essential information in a reading passage, isolating it visually from the rest of the surrounding text. While reading the text, students analyze ideas, evaluate ideas, and circle and underline essential information relevant to one’s reading purpose. With pencil in hand, students focus on what is being said in the text, leading to increases in comprehension and retention of textual material. **Marking the Text** can be used with textbook readings, articles, primary source materials, or classroom Cornell Notes.

How Should Students Mark the Text?

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There are three basic marks you should use when using the “**Marking the Text**” reading strategy. The first is to number (#) the paragraphs. Numbering the paragraphs (or, if it is a very long text, numbering chunks of text) allows a reader to refer quickly to specific areas of the text during class discussions. You should then complete a “clean read,” or one in which your pencil is down and you are reading to build familiarity with the structure and ideas of the text.

Then, you should reread all or parts of the text, marking essential information as you reread. Specifically, you should circle key terms/phrases and underline information relevant to the stated reading purpose. In other words, the information you mark will be determined by the purpose of the reading. Depending on the type of text being read, key terms might include key concepts, content-based vocabulary, lesson-based vocabulary, names of people/places/dates, formulas, repeated words, literary devices, or other terms related to the reading purpose. Examples of the types of information you will underline includes author’s claims, evidence, facts about a person, place, thing, or idea, descriptions, cause-and-effect relationships.....it just depends on the reading purpose.

When Should Students Mark the Text?

Since “**Marking the Text**” is a fundamental skill, it ought to be used whenever you are asked to read. When you are reading copies of articles, newspapers, source documents, or other consumables, you should automatically mark the text. Numbering paragraphs, circling words and phrases, underlining key information...this should become second nature to you as you practice and get into the habit. But what about when you are reading textbooks or other materials that you should not write directly on? Do you just not mark those types of texts? Of course you should; you just need to get a little creative. Suggestions for marking texts you are not allowed to write on include using sticky notes, overhead transparencies laid on top of the text, or a t-chart in your Cornell Notes where you keep track of circled key terms and underlined information (this last one is my personal favorite).

Why Should Students Mark the Text?

Students need to focus on the texts they read and they need tools to help them understand the complex ideas on the page, not to mention a way to stay engaged and focused while they read (Have you ever read a page of text, gotten all the way to the bottom, and realized that you zoned out the entire time and didn't remember anything you just read?). **Marking the Text** gives students a way to isolate essential information that can be referenced (or found) easily during a writing task or class discussion. Students might also use their markings

- to assist in summary writing,
- to connect sections of the text,
- to investigate claims or evidence,
- to engage in other types of analysis
- to interact with their Cornell Notes because numbering paragraphs/chunks/main ideas, circling key terms, and underlining essential information is an important part of Note-making (or step R—Review and Revise Your Notes)

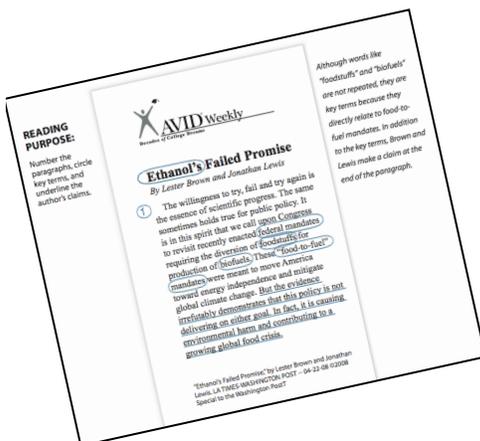
Numbering paragraphs is also essential for class discussions. Once paragraphs are numbered, students can easily direct others to those places where they have found relevant information. **Marking the Text** is a fundamental strategy that students must learn to do well.

Key Questions to Consider:

Ultimately, Critical Reading strategies are meant to help you become a better reader, helping you to increase your level of college readiness so you can do well now and also prepare for life in the University after high school. This is not just busy work....**Marking the Text** is one type of strategy good readers turn into a habit so that they can construct meaning from the texts they read. Someday you won't be reading "like" a college student....you will be reading "as" a college student.

Ask the following questions to help you reflect on the use of **Marking the Text**:

- How did this strategy improve your understanding of the text?
- What stood out to you that you would have missed otherwise?
- What did using Marking the Text do to your level of interest, engagement, and/or understanding while you read?
- Why would readers want to use this strategy?
- When would you want to use a strategy like Marking the Text? How would you mark a text in your other classes?
- What types of texts would it be useful on? What types would you want to steer-clear of using it on?



Marking the Text: *Science*

This strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs

- ① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indention and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.
- ② As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

You might circle...

- key concepts
- content-based vocabulary
- lesson-based vocabulary
- names of people, theories, and/or experiments
- properties
- elements
- formulas
- units of measure
- variables
- values
- percentages

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Underline the author's claims and other information relevant to the reading purpose.

While reading informational texts (i.e. textbooks, reference books, articles, or journals), read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task. Relevant information might include:

- concerns
- claims
- data
- definitions
- descriptions
- evidence
- examples
- explanations
- guiding language
- hypothesis
- "if-then" statements
- main ideas
- methods
- processes

- _____
- _____
- _____

Here are some strategies to help students identify essential information in the reading:

- Read the introduction to the primary or secondary source.
- Scan the text for visuals, vocabulary, comprehension questions, or other reading aids.
- Review your notes for key concepts.
- Preview chapter or unit reviews.

Note: If you are not working with consumables, consider photocopying sections of a text that are essential to writing assignments, course content, exams, or other class activities.



Marking the Text: *Mathematics (Word Problems)*

This strategy has four distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs

- ① When reading a word problem that is only one paragraph, number each sentence.
 - ② For longer word problems, start with 1 and count by fives (1, 5, 10).
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2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

You might circle...

- action words
- sum, add, more than
- multiply
- simplify
- divide
- difference, subtract
- units
- amounts
- values
- percentages
- variables
- formulas
- solve

- _____
 - _____
 - _____
-

3. Underline verbal models.

You might also underline...

- A process
 - Definitions
 - Descriptions
 - Explanations
-

4. Box the question.

In a word problem or multiple choice question,
draw a box around the question.



Marking the Text

This strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the Paragraphs.



- 1 Before you read, take a moment to number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and keep going until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment.
- 2 As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to it later.

2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.



You might circle...

- Key concepts
- Lesson-based vocabulary
- Names of people, places, dates
- Names of historical events
- Numbers
- Repeated words
- Anything relevant to the reading purpose

3. Underline the author's claims*, evidence, and other information relevant to the reading purpose.



While reading informational texts (i.e. textbooks, journals, articles, or primary source documents), read carefully to identify information that is relevant to your reading purpose. Relevant information might include...

- Central claims
- Evidence
- Facts about a person, place, thing, or idea
- Description of a person, place, thing, or idea
- Cause-and-effect relationships
- Repeated words
- Anything relevant to the reading purpose

* A claim is an arguable statement or assertion made by the author that not everyone would agree with.* Data, facts, or other backing is used by an author to support his/her claims.

*Ultimately, what you circle and underline will depend on your reading purpose. You need to crystal-clear **before** you read something as to **WHY** (or for what reason/purpose) you are reading it. In addition to marking key terms and claims, you might be asked to mark other essential information such as the author's evidence or descriptions.*



Discussing Your Markings

Use the questions below to guide your discussions about what you marked in a text. Then, use the sentence starters to help you talk about the text.

When Reading Argument



Ask these types of questions when discussing what you marked in an **argument**.

Questions

What did you circle and underline?
What claims does the author make?
Where does the author use key terms?
How are the key terms related to the argument?

Sentence Starters

- The author argues in paragraph ____ that...
- I found ____ key terms in paragraph ____
- I noticed the author uses...
- I circled ____ because...
- The author makes his/her first claim in paragraph ____

When Reading Informational Text



Ask these types of questions when discussing what you marked in an **informational text**.

Questions

What did you circle and underline?
What did you underline as the main idea?
What words are related to the main idea?
Where does the author define an idea?

Sentence Starters

- The author's main idea is in paragraph ____
- I found a central idea in paragraph ____
- I noticed the author uses...
- I circled ____ because...

Example of Marking the Text

the Paragraphs \hookrightarrow key Terms — essential information

① In addition to their government, the Romans prided themselves on their powerful and well-organized army. And they used that army to expand their territory. The Romans eventually conquered all of what is modern-day Italy as well as other nearby lands. During a series of wars between 264 and 146 B.C., Roman forces defeated a powerful North African civilization known as Carthage. (These wars were known as the Punic Wars.) The victory gave the Romans control over much of the Mediterranean Sea.

② **Decline of the Republic** As the Roman Republic grew larger and more populated, the task of maintaining order and stability became increasingly difficult. In addition, tensions arose between the different classes in Roman society. Eventually, Rome fell into a civil war, which is a conflict between different groups within a country.

③ In 45 B.C., a powerful Roman general named Julius Caesar brought order to Rome and named himself sole ruler. This brought an end to the Roman Republic. In 44 B.C., political opponents of Caesar killed him. A bloody power struggle followed. Caesar's adopted son Octavian emerged as the winner and unchallenged ruler of Rome. He took the title Augustus (aw•GUHS•tuhs), or "divine one." His rule began an era of great growth for Rome as the empire reached the greatest extent of its size and influence.

Augustus Under the leadership of Augustus, Rome became a mighty empire. ▼

④ **Rome Becomes an Empire** Under Augustus, Rome became an empire. An empire is a group of different cultures or territories led by a single all-powerful ruler. The ruler of an empire is known as the emperor. Augustus was a careful and brilliant leader. He used his power to create a strong government. The Senate continued to represent citizens' interests, but it now had little power. During his rule, a long period of peace and prosperity began. It is known as the Pax Romana, or "Roman Peace."

⑤ Augustus died in A.D. 14, but the policies he began enabled Rome to grow and become stronger. By the second century A.D., the Roman Empire reached its largest size. It ruled over two million square miles. Tied together by more than 50,000 miles of roads, the empire extended from Spain in the west to Mesopotamia in the east. It took in lands from Britain in the north to the Sahara in the south. Approximately 60 million people lived under Roman rule. They included Celts, Germans, North Africans, Greeks, Syrians, Jews, and Egyptians.

REVIEW How did Rome build such a powerful empire?

