

READING AND SUMMARIZING AND PARAPHRASING

READING

When asked to write a summary on a particular reading or when asked to respond to a particular reading, you obviously have to read the passage. But most students make the mistake of thinking that one read is enough. If you really want to understand what you're reading, be prepared to read the text multiple times. You should also employ a few basic reading strategies used by almost all critical readers. The following is a process of basic reading strategies with which you should become familiar.

Get a General Overview

The first read is just to get a general overview of the passage and to prepare you for more in-depth readings. Pay attention to the title and any headings, but don't try to do more on the first read than just read for a general overview, and don't expect that you'll understand the text in any depth at this point.

Annotate

Now get out your pencil or pen and highlighters and get ready to annotate. When you annotate, you interact with the text, making notes in the margin and marking up material using circles, asterisks, boxes, connecting lines, underlines, highlighting, and so on. How you mark a text is up to you, and there are many different ways to do it. Here are just a few suggested strategies that you might use to interact with your text:

- ④ First, you might try to visually chunk the text into parts by drawing lines to divide the essay into parts or the different ideas that the author address. You can also use the headers (if provided) to help you do this.
- ④ Mark passages that you agree or disagree with, and make a quick note as to why.
- ④ Jot down how certain passages make you feel.
- ④ Mark areas that are confusing to you.
- ④ If a passage sparks a memory, make a note of it.
- ④ Ask questions—How? Why? and so on—in the margins.
- ④ Look for reading strands, which are simply repetitions. To do this, look for and mark specific words or phrases (ideas, really) that are repeated. You can also look for repeating emotions, questions, rhetorical modes, transitions, arguments, and so on. If a concept or rhetorical move is repeated over and over again, it's a good bet that it's important to the text.
- ④ Try to identify the author's thesis, main ideas, and details. You might want to use three different colored highlighters for this one.

Note: All of the above can NOT be done in one reading. Try chunking up the tasks into multiple reads, but also be aware that while you might be looking for repetitions you also might notice main ideas. In other words, all of these strategies will blend together, but you shouldn't try to do them ALL in just one reading. The more you read a passage, the better you'll understand it.

Once you feel as though you understand the passage well and can identify the author's thesis, main ideas, and details, then you're ready to summarize.

SUMMARIZING

A summary is a shortened version of the original text in which you restate *in your own words, organization, and style* the author's thesis and main ideas. A summary does not contain your own thoughts or opinions.