

TTT = Talking To the Text

Active Reading Strategies are things you can do to keep yourself more involved in the text. Instead of passively taking in the text and hoping things sink in, an active reader identifies key ideas, comments on the ideas in the text, and reacts to what he or she is reading. If done properly, you should be able to return to marked up text a week later and quickly locate specific information or understand the main ideas by simply skimming the text.

Marking up a text:

1. ***Make passages stand out*** using a variety of marks.
 - a. **Underline** key passages:
 - i) Main ideas, descriptions, and opinions.
 - b. **Circle or draw a squiggly line under** especially important words.
 - i) Words that indicate a kind of evidence follows – *example, survey, study, poll,* etc.
 - ii) Transition words (“shifters”) – words like *but, however, although, despite, even though,* and *nonetheless.*
2. ***Highlight*** only what is absolutely necessary.
3. ***Write in the margins:***
 - a. **Summarize** – write a phrase about the kind of information in a paragraph.
 - b. **Draw a line down the side** to indicate that several sentences are important. That way, you’re not underlining too much.
 - c. **Draw an arrow, or asterisk** next to an especially important passage.
 - d. Mark + and – to indicate positive and negative things.
 - e. Write “ex” next to examples (studies, polls, etc.) used to illustrate an idea.
 - f. Write “def” to indicate definitions.
4. ***Play “connect the dots.”*** If a question is posed and later answered, or a similar concept appears a different parts of the reading, circle the key words and draw a light line between them, going right over the top of the sentences in between.
5. ***Make the text “skimmable”*** by underlining or circling the one word in the topic and/or concluding sentence that holds the key to the subject of the paragraph.

Tips:

- ***Mix your techniques.*** If you normally underline, you may want to return to the text with a highlighter to make only those parts that are most crucial stand out even more.
- ***Use strategies sparingly.*** If you underline, circle, and/or highlight almost everything, nothing will stand out and you will have defeated the purpose.

What to do if you can’t write on a text:

If the book isn’t yours to write in, or if it isn’t practical to photocopy the text, little **post-it notes** can allow you read actively while leaving it clean for the next reader.

Among other things, post-its can be used to:

- Summarize ideas and mark important passages.
- Comment on themes or ideas that are developing.
- Make connections to ideas elsewhere in the text or in the world outside it.