How to Annotate an Article

edits by: Shinako, Dianni, Estel (see all)

Four Methods: ■ General Annotation Procedures ■ Annotating an Article by Hand ■ Annotating a PDF Article
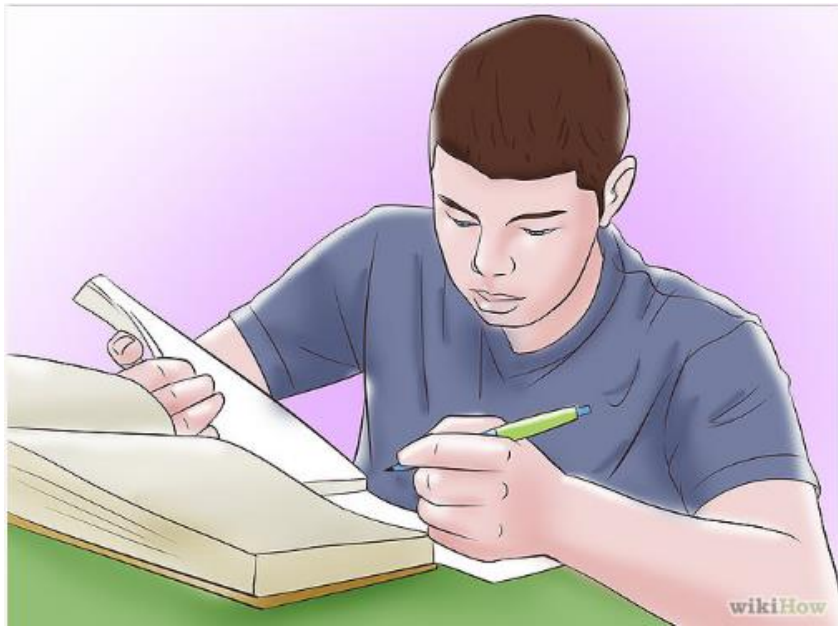■ Annotating an Article on a Webpage

Annotation refers to the process of highlighting a text and taking notes in the text. It is an important part of academic research and collaborative editing. [1] Use the general annotation notes with the annotation format of your choice. You can annotate an article by hand, on a PDF or with an online note-taking program.

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Method 1 of 4: General Annotation Procedures

1 Note the source information at the top of the page, if you are annotating on a separate piece of paper. If you are annotating on the article itself, you can skip this step.

- Note both the source, in detail and the day and you accessed it. Some newspaper articles are edited frequently as events transpire.
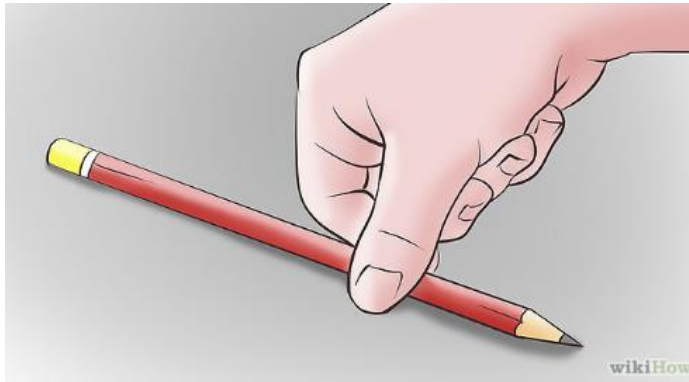
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2 Find out if you are being asked to annotate for a specific essay topic or discussion. If so, highlight all parts of the text that refer to this topic. Highlighted text can be easily referred to during a class or when writing.

3 **Grab a pencil or pen.** Use brackets to point to the part of the text to which you are referring, and then jot down phrases or sentences in the margins.

- If you are using a separate sheet of paper, note the page and line number for easy reference. If there is only 1 annotation on a page, you can leave out the line number.
- If you are using a digital form of annotation, you can highlight and add a comment, which will place your notes in the margins, similar to written marginalia.

4 **Annotate as you read the article.** Never read the article and try to go back to annotate it, unless you plan to read it again. Annotation is as much focused on encouraging active reading as writing or research.
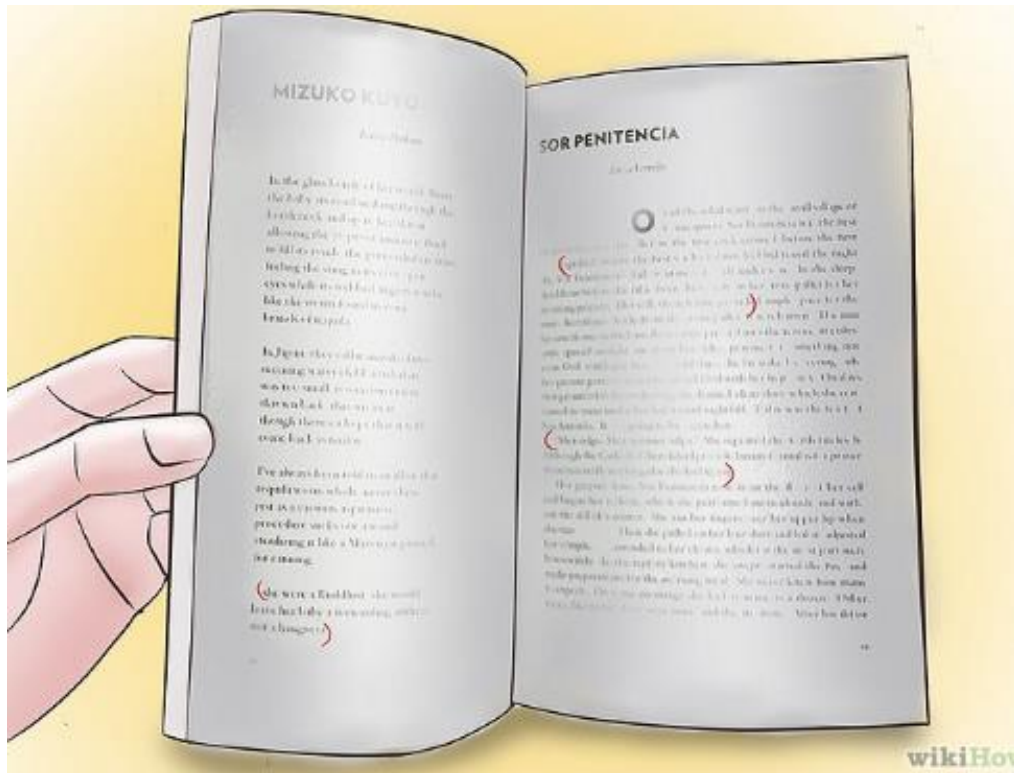
5 Ask questions as you go through the text. Jot questions in the margins, such as "Who is the person they are quoting?" or "To what is the author referring?". It will encourage a deeper reading of the article.

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6 Focus on themes and connections to your class topics. Bracket the sentences and write a theme or phrase in the margin.
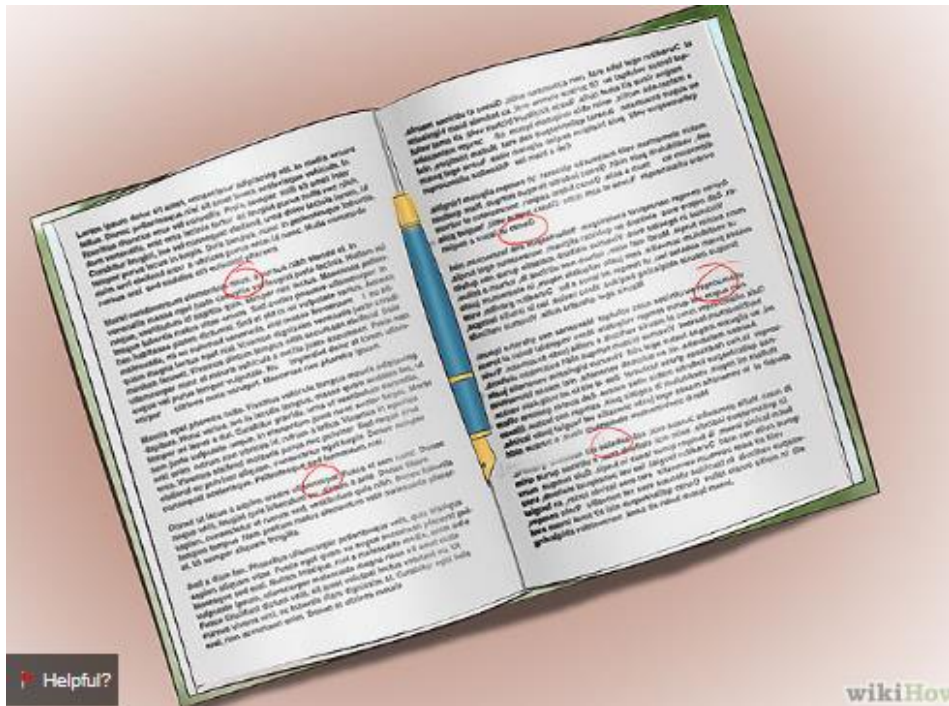
7 **Write down your opinions.** Whether you agree or disagree with the article's author, you should record the connections you make next to the passage that inspired the thoughts.

8 Circle words or concepts that you don't understand. Make a list of circled words on a piece of paper and look them up. You will increase your comprehension of the article. [2]

Method 2 of 4: Annotating an Article by Hand

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1 **Make a photocopy of the article.** It is easier to annotate when you can use a highlighter in addition to a pencil. You will be able to retain the text for future research.
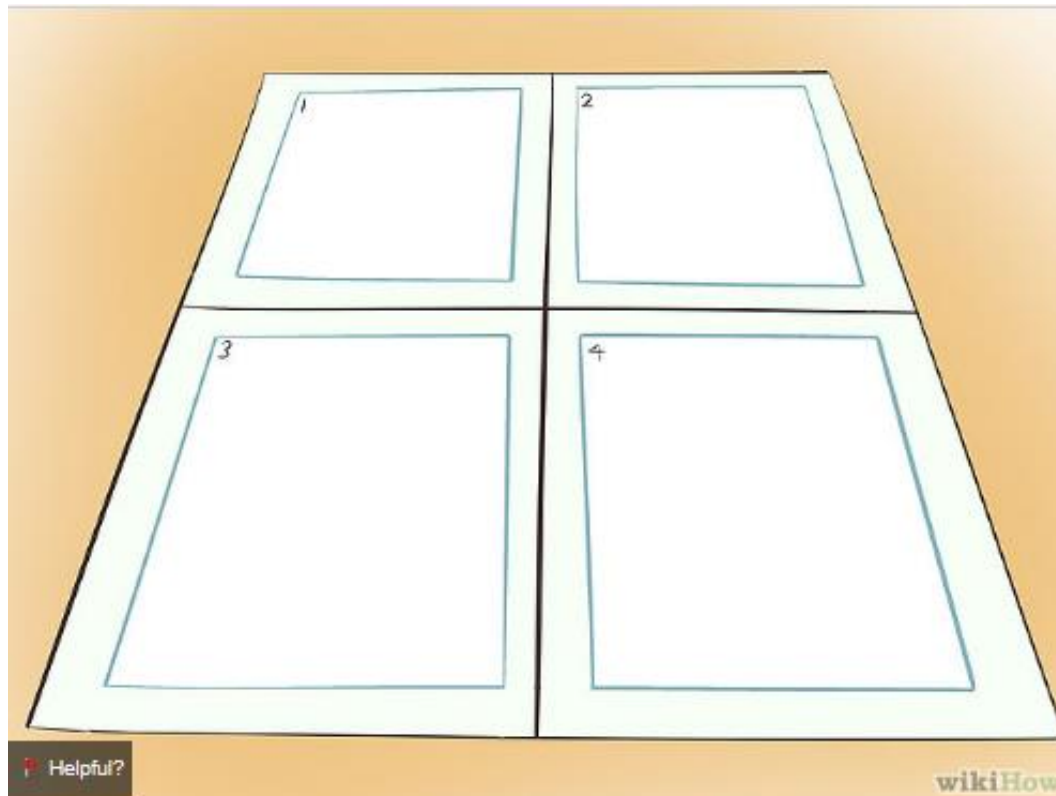
2 Use a separate sheet of paper if the margins on the newspaper or magazine are too small.

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3 Split the sheet into sections, according to subtitles in the article, if you are using a different sheet of paper. You can easily organize your annotations.

4 **Write an article annotation when you are finished.** Many teachers ask their students to write a bibliography entry, followed by a 2 to 5-sentence description of the text. If you have been assigned to do this, reread your annotations and write it according to the themes and concepts you have noted.

- A descriptive annotation simply sums up an article, while a critical annotation expresses the reader's opinion toward the text. [3]
- Ask your teacher if your bibliography should be MLA, Chicago or APA style before completing it. Each will contain different bibliographic data.

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Method 3 of 4: Annotating a PDF Article

1 Save the PDF version of the article on your computer.

- This method is commonly used for article editing, tablet/phone annotation and other mobile research, as well as in academics.
- If you are unable to find a PDF version of an Internet article, try saving a PDF version with your browser. Go to the File menu and select "Print." Choose the "Save as PDF" or "Open as PDF" options, and then save the file to your computer.

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2 Make sure you have a text-based PDF of the article, rather than an image PDF. PDF programs that recognize text in an article allow you to highlight specific lines. Images won't allow any manipulation to the article.

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3 Download a PDF reading program, such as Adobe Reader or Apple Preview.

4 **Open the file in the program.** If you are using Apple Preview, you should go to the Tools menu and select "Annotate" to access the annotation toolbar. If you are using Adobe Reader, you should go to the View menu and select "Comment" and "Annotations." [4]
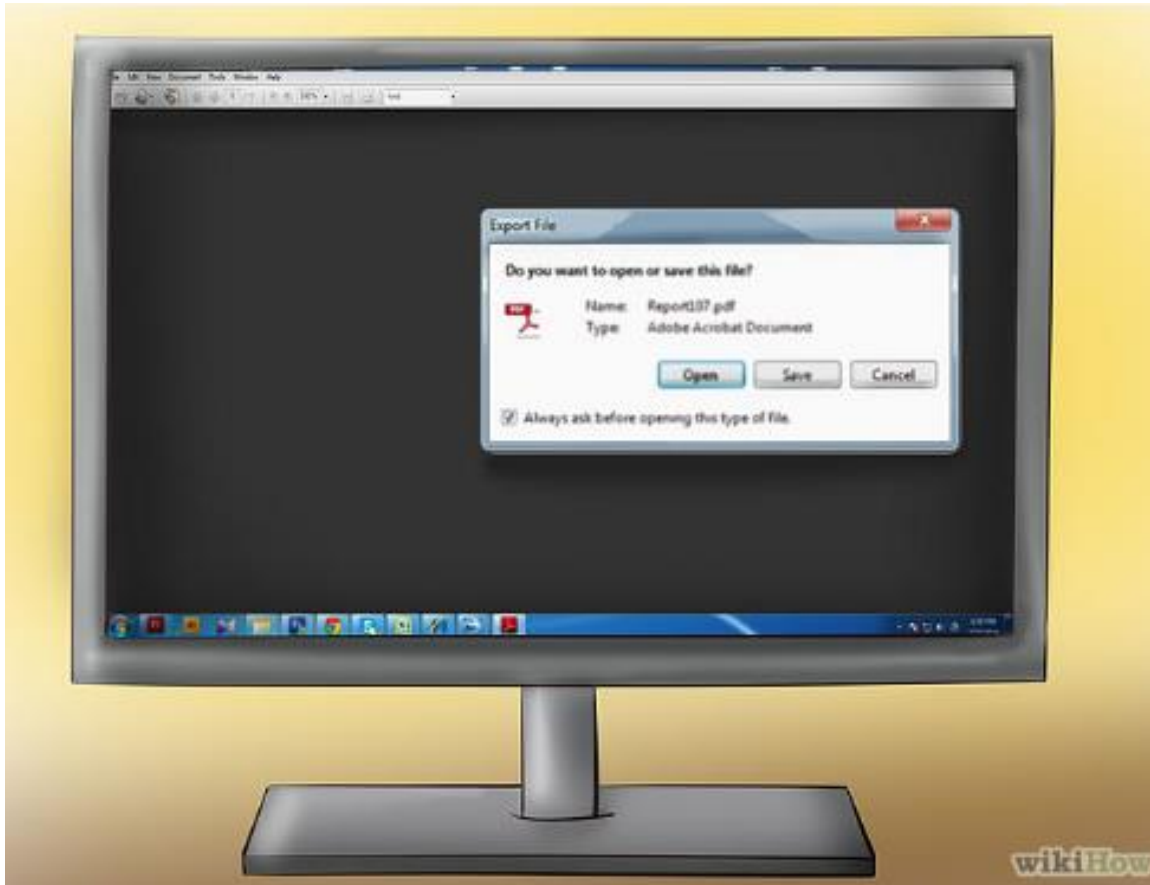
- Go through the functions of the annotation toolbar in either program. They both feature icons that allow you to highlight, comment, change text color, strikethrough text and more.

- If you are using a PDF image file, you can draw a box or select a point on the image. Then you can add notes on the side.

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5 **Read your article.** When you come to a passage that you want to highlight, use the highlight tool. When you are ready to comment, use the text bubble tool to write your thoughts in the margins.

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6 **Save the article.** You may want to include your name in the file. For example, "Biodiversity in the Jungle with annotations by John Smith."

Method 4 of 4: Annotating an Article on a Webpage

1 **Download an online note-taking program.** Evernote is perhaps the most well known note-taking system on the market; however, it requires a monthly subscription. Other good, free programs include MarkUp.io, Bounce, Shared Copy, WebKlipper, Diigo and Springnote.[5]
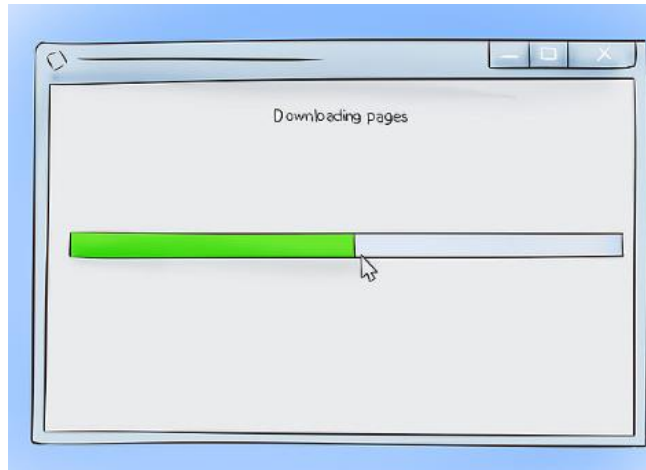
- If you need to collaborate on annotations or send them to your teacher, an online note-keeping tool may be the best option.
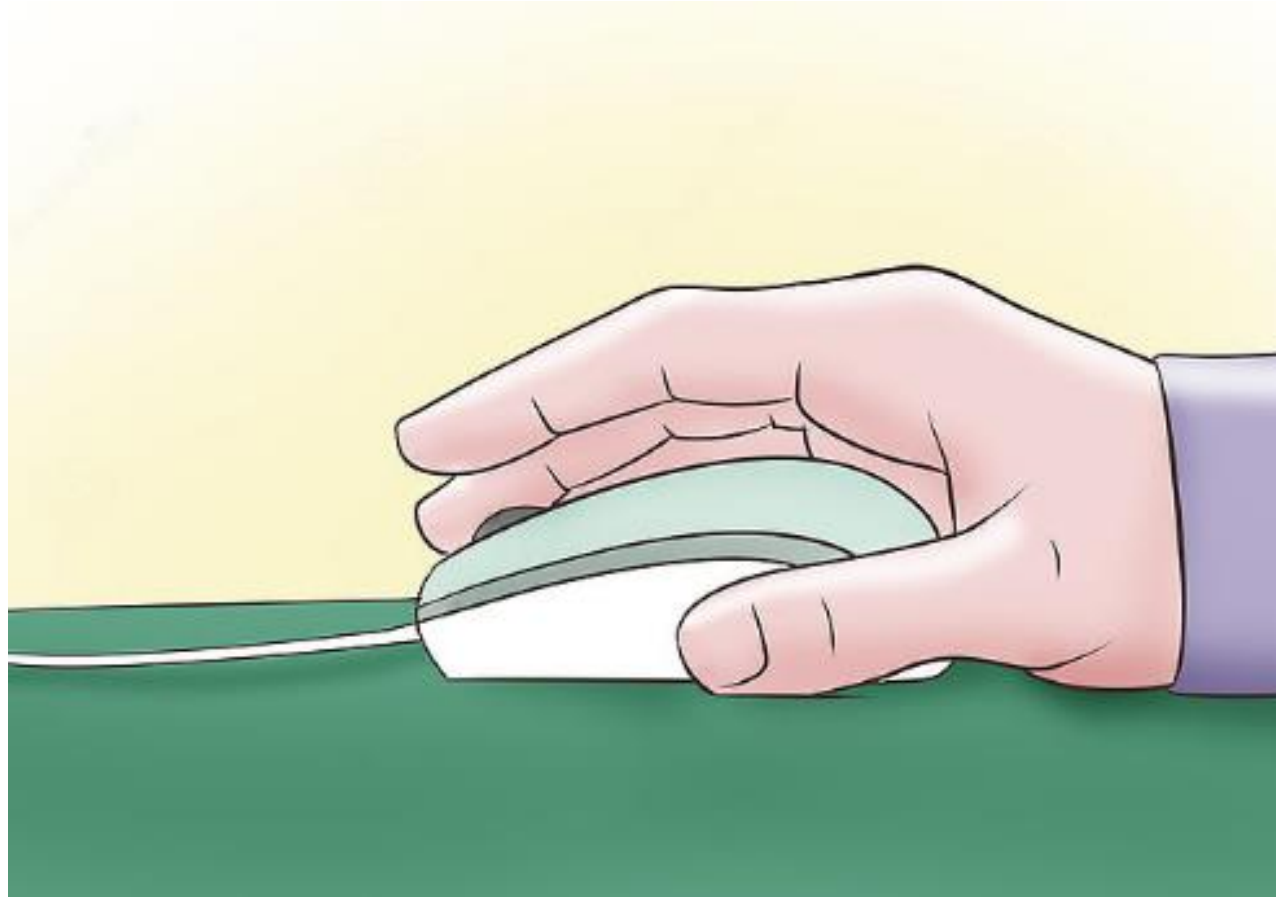
2 **Install the tool on your browser or computer.** You may be required to create an account, sign up for a free trial or sign up for a subscription to access the annotation functions.

- Evernote is a multi-platform tool, so you can use it on your computer and iPhone, if you want annotations to be available on the go.
- Diigo is a browser add-on that is designed for easy annotation and collaboration.

3 Navigate to the webpage on which your article is posted.

4 Click the browser add-on button, usually located near the address bar. On some add-ons, you will need to highlight page text before clicking on the button.

5 Use the annotation toolbar to highlight, draw or note information.

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6 Save the annotation, if you want to clip it and use it outside of the web. You can also do a screenshot in place of saving the entire annotated article.

- If you have an account with the online note-taking service, it will save the note to your account to access later.

Sources and Citations

Edit

1. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_annotation
2. ↑ http://www.arteducators.org/news/national-convention/Zimmerman_How_to_Annotate.pdf
3. ↑ http://myrin.ursinus.edu/help/resrch_guides/annotate.htm
4. ↑ http://eproof.dartmouthjournals.com/pdfproofing/forms/annotate_readerX.pdf
5. ↑ http://mashable.com/2010/12/23/free-annotation-collaboration-tools/

Article Info

Categories: Writing and Editing

Thanks to all the authors for contributing: Shinako, Dianni, Estel (see all)

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