

HUNTER COLLEGE READING/WRITING CENTER  
**THE WRITING PROCESS**  
**Invention: Annotating a Text**

Annotating a text, or marking the pages with notes, is an excellent, if not essential, way to make the most out of the reading you do for college courses. Annotations make it easy to find important information quickly when you look back and review a text. They help you familiarize yourself with both the content and organization of what you read. They provide a way to begin engaging ideas and issues directly through comments, questions, associations, or other reactions that occur to you as you read. In all these ways, annotating a text makes the reading process an active one, not just background for writing assignments, but an integral first step in the writing process.

A well-annotated text will accomplish all of the following:

- clearly identify where in the text important ideas and information are located
- express the main ideas of a text
- trace the development of ideas/arguments throughout a text
- introduce a few of the reader's thoughts and reactions

Ideally, you should read a text through once before making major annotations. You may just want to circle unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts. This way, you will have a clearer idea about where major ideas and important information are in the text, and your annotating will be more efficient.

A brief description and discussion of four ways of annotating a text and a sample annotated text follow:

### **! Highlighting/Underlining**

Highlighting or underlining key words and phrases or major ideas is the most common form of annotating texts. Many people use this method to make it easier to review material, especially for exams. Highlighting is also a good way of picking out specific language within a text that you may want to cite or quote in a piece of writing. However, over-reliance on highlighting is unwise for two reasons. First, there is a tendency to highlight more information than necessary, especially when done on a first reading. Second, highlighting is the least active form of annotating. Instead of being a way to begin thinking and interacting with ideas in texts, highlighting can become a postponement of that process.

On the other hand, highlighting is a useful way of marking parts of a text that you want to make notes about. And it's a good idea to highlight the words or phrases of a text that are referred to by your other annotations.

### **! Paraphrase/Summary of Main Ideas**

Going beyond locating important ideas to being able to capture their meaning through paraphrase is a way of solidifying your understanding of these ideas. It's also excellent preparation for any writing you may have to do based on your reading. A series of brief notes in the margins beside important ideas gives you a handy summary right on the pages of the text itself, and if you can take the substance of a sentence or paragraph and condense it into a few words, you should have little trouble clearly demonstrating your understanding of the ideas in question in your own writing.

## **! Descriptive Outline**

A descriptive outline shows the organization of a piece of writing, breaking it down to show where ideas are introduced, where they are developed, and where any turns in the development occur. A descriptive outline allows you to see not only where the main ideas are but also where the details, facts, explanations, and other kinds of support for those ideas are located.

A descriptive outline will focus on the function of individual paragraphs or sections within a text. These functions might include any of the following:

- Summarizing a topic/argument/etc.
- Introducing an idea
- Adding explanation
- Giving examples
- Providing factual evidence
- Expanding or limiting the idea
- Considering an opposing view
- Dismissing a contrary view
- Creating a transition
- Stating a conclusion

This list is hardly exhaustive and it's important to recognize that several of these functions may be repeated within a text, particularly ones that contain more than one major idea.

Making a descriptive outline allows you to follow the construction of the writer's argument and/or the process of his/her thinking. It helps identify which parts of the text work together and how they do so.

## **! Comments/Responses**

You can use annotation to go beyond understanding a text's meaning and organization by noting your reactions—agreement/disagreement, questions, related personal experience, connection to ideas from other texts, class discussions, etc. This is an excellent way to begin formulating your own ideas for writing assignments based on the text or on any of the ideas it contains.

## Sample Annotated Text, Two Ways (for Niteo students)

Using "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are"

Transcript

Amy Cuddy, 2009, TED Talks

[http://www.ted.com/talks/  
amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_shapes\\_who\\_you\\_are/transcript?  
language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are/transcript?language=en)

### Method #1: Writing in the Margins (pages 4-6 )

KEY:

**Bold = Main Ideas**

Normal font=Descriptive Outline

*Italics=Comments*

### Method #2: The Three-Column Method (page 7 )

Intro/Hook

0:11 So I want to start by offering you a free no-tech life hack, and all it requires of you is this: that you change your posture for two minutes. But before I give it away, I want to ask you to right now do a little audit of your body and what you're doing with your body. So how many of you are sort of making yourselves smaller? Maybe you're hunching, crossing your legs, maybe wrapping your ankles. Sometimes we hold onto our arms like this. Sometimes we spread out. (Laughter) I see you. (Laughter) So I want you to pay attention to what you're doing right now. We're going to come back to that in a few minutes, and I'm hoping that if you learn to tweak this a little bit, it could significantly change the way your life unfolds.

*What is my posture right now? I'm wrapping my ankles, so what?*

Intro idea

0:58 So, we're really fascinated with body language, and we're particularly interested in other people's body language. You know, we're interested in, like, you know — (Laughter) — an awkward interaction, or a smile, or a contemptuous glance, or maybe a very awkward wink, or maybe even something like a handshake.

**We find body language (BL) compelling**

Illustrate w examples

1:22 Narrator: Here they are arriving at Number 10, and look at this lucky policeman gets to shake hands with the President of the United States. Oh, and here comes the Prime Minister of the — ? No. (Laughter) (Applause) (Laughter) (Applause)

1:37 Amy Cuddy: So a handshake, or the lack of a handshake, can have us talking for weeks and weeks and weeks. Even the BBC and The New York Times. So obviously when we think about nonverbal behavior, or body language -- but we call it nonverbals as social scientists -- it's language, so we think about communication. When we think about communication, we think about interactions. So what is your body language communicating to me? What's mine communicating to you?

Nonverbals = body language

**We focus on BL to interpret interactions**

Expanding Idea

2:04 And there's a lot of reason to believe that this is a valid way to look at this. So social scientists have spent a lot of time looking at the effects of our body language, or other people's body language, on judgments. And we make sweeping judgments and inferences from body language. And those judgments can predict really meaningful life outcomes like who we hire or promote, who we ask out on a date.

Presenting Evidence

For example, Nalini Ambady, a researcher at Tufts University, shows that when people watch 30-second soundless clips of real physician-patient interactions, their judgments of the physician's niceness predict whether or not that physician will be sued. So it doesn't have to do so much with whether or not that physician was incompetent, but do we like that person and how they interacted? Even more dramatic, Alex Todorov at Princeton has shown us that judgments of political candidates' faces in just one second predict 70 percent of U.S. Senate and gubernatorial race outcomes, and even, let's go digital, emoticons used well in online negotiations can lead to you claim more value from that negotiation. If you use them poorly, bad idea. Right? So when we think of

**Ppl make judgements & decisions based on NVs. (Ex. Doc lawsuits)**

nonverbals, we think of how we judge others, how they judge us and what the outcomes are. We tend to forget, though, the other audience that's influenced by our nonverbals, and that's ourselves.

Intro new idea

3:31 We are also influenced by our nonverbals, our thoughts and our feelings and our physiology. So what nonverbals am I talking about? I'm a social psychologist. I study prejudice, and I teach at a competitive business school, so it was inevitable that I would become interested in power dynamics. I became especially interested in nonverbal expressions of power and dominance.

Explain idea

3:56 And what are nonverbal expressions of power and dominance? Well, this is what they are. So in the animal kingdom, they are about expanding. So you make yourself big, you stretch out, you take up space, you're basically opening up. It's about opening up. And this is true across the animal kingdom. It's not just limited to primates. And humans do the same thing. (Laughter) So they do this both when they have power sort of chronically, and also when they're feeling powerful in the moment. And this one is especially interesting because it really shows us how universal and old these expressions of power are. This expression, which is known as pride, Jessica Tracy has studied. She shows that people who are born with sight and people who are congenitally blind do this when they win at a physical competition. So when they cross the finish line and they've won, it doesn't matter if they've never seen anyone do it. They do this. So the arms up in the V, the chin is slightly lifted. What do we do when we feel powerless? We do exactly the opposite. We close up. We wrap ourselves up. We make ourselves small. We don't want to bump into the person next to us. So again, both animals and humans do the same thing. And this is what happens when you put together high and low power. So what we tend to do when it comes to power is that we complement the other's nonverbals. So if someone is being really powerful with us, we tend to make ourselves smaller. We don't mirror them. We do the opposite of them.

**Animals & humans demo power through "big" BL**

Illustrate w examples

*It's fascinating that these expressions are universal – not culturally bound. Reminds me of readings on micro-expressions.*

5:24 So I'm watching this behavior in the classroom, and what do I notice? I notice that MBA students really exhibit the full range of power nonverbals. So you have people who are like caricatures of alphas, really coming into the room, they get right into the middle of the room before class even starts, like they really want to occupy space. When they sit down, they're sort of spread out. They raise their hands like this. You have other people who are virtually collapsing when they come in. As soon they come in, you see it. You see it on their faces and their bodies, and they sit in their chair and they make themselves tiny, and they go like this when they raise their hand. I notice a couple of things about this. One, you're not going to be surprised. It seems to be related to gender. So women are much more likely to do this kind of thing than men. Women feel chronically less powerful than men, so this is not surprising. But the other thing I noticed is that it also

seemed to be related to the extent to which the students were participating, and how well they were participating. And this is really important in the MBA classroom, because participation counts for half the grade.

Intro new idea

6:33 So business schools have been struggling with this gender grade gap. You get these equally qualified women and men coming in and then you get these differences in grades, and it seems to be partly attributable to participation. So I started to wonder, you know, okay, so you have these people coming in like this, and they're participating. Is it possible that we could get people to fake it and would it lead them to participate more?

6:57 So my main collaborator Dana Carney, who's at Berkeley, and I really wanted to know, can you fake it till you make it? Like, can you do this just for a little while and actually experience a behavioral outcome that makes you seem more powerful? So we know that our nonverbals govern how other people think and feel about us. There's a lot of evidence. But our question really was, do our nonverbals govern how we think and feel about ourselves?

7:24 There's some evidence that they do. So, for example, we smile when we feel happy, but also, when we're forced to smile by holding a pen in our teeth like this, it makes us feel happy. So it goes both ways. When it comes to power, it also goes both ways. So when you feel powerful, you're more likely to do this, but it's also possible that when you pretend to be powerful, you are more likely to actually feel powerful.

Expand idea

7:57 So the second question really was, you know, so we know that our minds change our bodies, but is it also true that our bodies change our minds? And when I say minds, in the case of the powerful, what am I talking about? So I'm talking about thoughts and feelings and the sort of physiological things that make up our thoughts and feelings, and in my case, that's hormones. I look at hormones. So what do the minds of the powerful versus the powerless look like? So powerful people tend to be, not surprisingly, more assertive and more confident, more optimistic. They actually feel that they're going to win even at games of chance. They also tend to be able to think more abstractly. So there are a lot of differences. They take more risks. There are a lot of differences between powerful and powerless people. Physiologically, there also are differences on two key hormones: testosterone, which is the dominance hormone, and cortisol, which is the stress hormone. So what we find is that high-power alpha males in primate hierarchies have high testosterone and low cortisol, and powerful and effective leaders also have high testosterone and low cortisol. So what does that mean?

Explain idea

When you think about power, people tended to think only about testosterone, because that was about dominance. But really, power is also about how you react to stress. So do you want the high-power leader that's dominant, high on

**Our actions impact how we feel and vice versa**

**Powerful ppl=high testosterone, low cortisol**

## Method #2: Three-Column

<b>Annotation:</b>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Descriptive Outline</b>	<b>Synthesis</b>
<i>Where in the text?</i>	<i>What is the overall message in this section? Also note key terms and supporting details that will cue your memory.</i>	<i>What is the function of this section? (e.g. introducing an idea, transitioning, presenting evidence)</i>	<i>Your "conversation" w/ the text. (e.g. comments, questions, relate to personal experience, connect to ideas from other sources)</i>
0:11-2:04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We find body language (BL) compelling</li> <li>We focus on BL to interpret interactions. (Ex. handshake video)</li> <li>NVs = body language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intro/Hook (no tech life hack, body audit)</li> <li>Illustrate w/ examples (video, pictures)</li> </ul>	What is my posture right now? I'm wrapping my ankles, so what?
2:04-3:31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ppl make broad judgements and impt decisions based on NVs. (Ex. Doc lawsuits)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding idea</li> <li>Present evidence (research studies)</li> </ul>	Wow, that's rough for politicians...do they have coaching sessions focused on controlling their facial expressions?
3:31-5:24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Term: NV expression of power and dominance</li> <li>Both animals and humans demo power w/ wide open nonverbals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce new concept</li> <li>Explain idea</li> <li>Illustrate w/ examples (pride)</li> </ul>	It's fascinating that these expressions are universal – not culturally bound. Reminds me of readings on micro-expressions.
5:24–7:24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main ? : Do our NVs determine our thoughts and emotions about ourselves?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Illustrate concept</li> <li>Intro new concept</li> </ul>	Interesting: gender diff in nonverbals
7:24–10:19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do our bodies change our minds?</li> <li>Specifically – do our NVs impact our hormones?</li> <li>Powerful ppl = high testosterone, low cortisol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand concept</li> <li>Add explanation</li> <li>Present evidence (primates)</li> </ul>	How do you decrease your cortisol levels?