

Writing in the Margins: Six Strategies at a Glance

This table provides six strategies that help readers understand texts. While making connections, clarifying information or doing other work defined on this page, write down your thoughts in the margins of the text, on sticky notes, or in your Cornell notes.

<p><u>Visualize</u></p> <p>Visualize what the author is saying and draw an illustration in the margin. Visualizing what authors say will help you clarify complex concepts and ideas.</p> <p>When visualizing, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this look like? • How can I draw this concept/idea? • What visual and/or symbol best represents this idea? 	<p><u>Summarize</u></p> <p>Briefly summarize paragraphs or sections of a text. Summarizing is a good way to keep track of essential information while gaining control of lengthier passages.</p> <p>Summaries will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • state what the paragraph is about • describe what the author is <i>doing</i> • account for key terms and/or ideas
<p><u>Clarify</u></p> <p>Clarify complex ideas presented in the text. Readers clarify ideas through a process of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Pausing to clarify ideas will increase your understanding of the ideas in the text.</p> <p>In order to clarify information, you might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define key terms • reread sections of the text • analyze or connect ideas in the text • paraphrase or summarize ideas 	<p><u>Connect</u></p> <p>Make connections within the reading to your own life and to the world. Making connections will improve your comprehension of the text.</p> <p>While reading, you might ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this relate to me? • How does this idea relate to other ideas in the text? • How does this relate to the world?
<p><u>Respond</u></p> <p>Respond to ideas in the text as you read. Your responses can be personal or analytical in nature. Thoughtful responses will increase engagement and comprehension.</p> <p>Readers will often respond to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interesting ideas • emotional arguments • provocative statements • author's claims • facts, data, and other support 	<p><u>Question</u></p> <p>Question both the ideas in the text and your own understanding of the text. Asking good questions while reading will help you become a more critical reader.</p> <p>While reading, you might ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author saying here? • What is the author doing? • What do I understand so far? • What is the purpose of this section? • What do I agree/disagree with?