

THE **5** “GOLDEN” RULES OF HIGHLIGHTING



Got One of These?
PROCEED WITH CAUTION

1 LESS IS MORE

Sure, a page that is entirely highlighted looks like you’ve REALLY been focusing. Hard. On every single word. But when you come back to the text, you’ll have to reread everything to figure out what was really important.

Try It: Only highlight key text elements. Decide on a system in advance so that you know whether something is “highlight-worthy” or not.

2 PUT A PLAN IN PLACE

While scribbling “OMG!” may make perfect sense to you while you’re reading, you might forget what blew your mind by the time you go back to the text.

Try It: Keep track of the following text elements using different colors or a shorthand code: Argumentation, Author’s Purpose, Cause & Effect, Compare & Contrast, Inference & Evidence, Main Ideas & Details, Sequence.

3 GO BEYOND YELLOW

While you don’t need to bust out the 48-count box of markers every time you read, using more than one color can help you distinguish between different text elements or themes in a quick, visual way.

Try It: Come up with a color code such as purple for argument, green for evidence, and blue for main ideas & details.

4 LOOK FOR POWER WORDS

Reading is a great way to grow your vocabulary. And growing your vocabulary is a great way to impress the socks off college recruiters, future employers, even your teacher.

Try It: Highlight or circle words that you don’t know and want to look up (now or later).

5 MAKE IT PERSONAL

Annotation isn’t just about identifying text elements and completing the assignment. It’s a great way to record your personal reactions to the text, including things you found surprising, funny, or sniff, tear jerking.

Try It: Imagine that an evolved life form 2,000 years from now has found your copy of *In Cold Blood*. What would you want him or her to know about you, based on your notes?