Highlighting and Marking Textbooks

IF YOU HIGHLIGHT, DO YOU

- read first, and then highlight (or underline)?
- read analytically to determine what is important and how ideas are related?
- usually highlight key words and phrases instead of entire sentences?
- highlight selectively -- no more than ¼ to 1/3 of a page?
- highlight accurately to capture the key points?
- stay focused and read actively while you highlight?
- avoid highlighting unless you’ll have ample time to review what you highlighted?

IN ADDITION TO HIGHLIGHTING, DO YOU

- circle the most important words within your highlighting?
- mark important concepts, definitions, and lists in the margins?
- write numbers in the margin to indicate lists or sequence of points?
- draw arrows in the margins to indicate relationships between points?
- write annotations in the margins such as “Likely test item,” “Ask about in class,” “Compare to class notes,” or “Re-read”?
- put stars or asterisks in the margins next to the most important points in the chapter?
- draw vertical lines in the margin to draw attention to important points already highlighted?
- use different colors of ink to distinguish between primary and secondary points?
- use stick-on notes to mark important pages? (This is especially useful to prepare for open-book tests.)
- fold over the corner of pages that contain especially important information.
- at the top or bottom of each page, write questions and perhaps answers that a passage may have raised in your mind, or reduced a complicated explanation to one or two sentences, or recorded a sequence of major points?
IF YOU CHOSE NOT TO WRITE IN YOUR TEXTBOOKS, DO YOU

_______ use margins on most pages to summarize key points in a few words and add comments for yourself?

_______ write summaries after each section?

_______ take notes while you read?

_______ compare the reading with your class notes and add details to your notes?

Remember: Underlining or highlighting shouldn’t be passive. It shouldn’t be a way to avoid the inevitable work of studying.

Permission to duplicate this material was granted by Ms. Sharon Green, Coordinator of the Office of Academic Support, Niagara University.