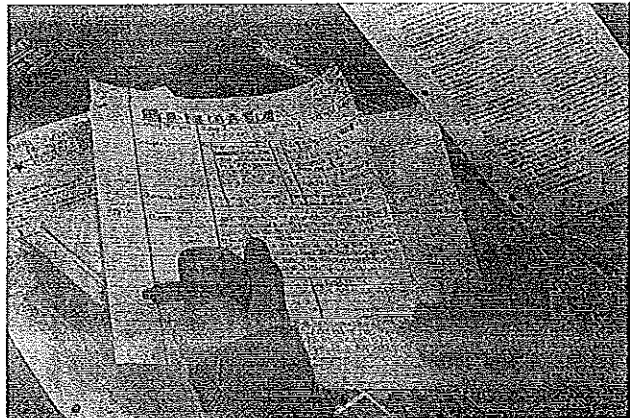


S T R A T E G Y 5

Marking the Text



“Marking the Text” is an active reading strategy that asks students to think critically about their reading.¹ While reading the text, students analyze ideas, evaluate ideas, and circle and underline essential information. This strategy has three distinct marks: numbering paragraphs, circling key terms, and underlining information relevant to one’s reading purpose. With pencil in hand, students focus on what is being said in the text, leading to increases in comprehension and retention of textual material.

How should students Mark the Text?

The key to this strategy (and all other strategies in this book) is support. Help your students learn by modeling how to mark texts. Take it slowly. Teach them how to number paragraphs before moving into circling and underlining. Create opportunities for students to learn this strategy and allow time for rehearsal. Students will benefit from lots of practice. When introducing the strategy, have students first number the paragraphs and then read the text with their pencils down. Then, have them reread all or parts of the text, marking essential information as they reread. As students gain a deeper understanding of this skill, they will be able to mark essential information while reading a text for the first time.

Young readers will need a purpose for marking. In the beginning, they will need to be shown how to mark the text. As they mature into capable readers, they will be able to mark texts with less guidance. Mastery of this skill is achieved through consistency and repetition.

When should students Mark the Text?

Since marking the text is a fundamental skill, it ought to be used whenever students are asked to read. When students are reading copies of articles, newspapers, or other consumables, they should be given a reading purpose and encouraged (if not expected) to mark the text. Textbooks, novels, and other non-consumables are harder to mark. Sometimes it is valuable to photocopy sections of a textbook or novel, especially those passages that students must understand for tests, papers, or another assessment. Sticky notes work as a nice substitute for directly marking on the text. Whether working with consumables or non-consumables, it is necessary to find ways for students to actively mark the texts they read.

Why should students Mark the Text?

Students need to focus on the texts they read, and they need tools that will help them understand the complex ideas on the page. Marking the text gives students a way to isolate essential information that can be referenced quickly during writing tasks or class discussions. Students might also use their markings to assist in summary writing; to connect sections of the text; to investigate claims or evidence; or to engage in other types of analysis. Numbering paragraphs is also essential for class discussions. Once paragraphs are numbered, students can easily direct others to those places where they have found relevant information. Marking the text is a fundamental strategy that students must learn to do well.

Marking the Text

The following provides some effective ways teachers can introduce marking the text as a critical reading strategy.

Introducing Marking the Text

- Define the “Marking the Text” strategy and explain why it is important for readers to learn this skill. You will want to make copies of the Quick Reference you select or make the ideas on the handout available to students in some other way.
- Explicitly teach how to identify and number paragraphs. Try to have fun with this activity. You might ask students to call out paragraph numbers as you number them as a class. Or you can have students check each other’s numbers to ensure they are numbering each paragraph accurately.
- Explicitly teach students how to identify essential information in the text. Students will need support as they learn how to identify claims, evidence, and other relevant information.
- Model for students how to mark the text using a document camera or overhead projector. Mark a section of the text and verbally explain what you are doing and why you are doing it. Your decisions should be transparent and your explanations clear. Ask questions as you model this skill. Students should have a copy of the text so that they can imitate your markings.
- Select specific paragraphs or sections of text for students to analyze and evaluate in order to reduce the amount of text they have to read at one time.
- Ask students to read the text once without marking it. Then, have them reread the text, marking information relevant to the reading purpose.
- Engage students in various cognitive exercises. Ask questions such as, “How did this strategy improve your comprehension?” and “Why would readers want to use this strategy?” Other useful questions include “How should we, for instance, mark or chart this text?” and “How could you use this strategy in English or Biology?”
- Create opportunities for students to learn this strategy in small groups. Students can mark texts together or they can discuss how and why they marked a particular section of a text.

Use the lines below to record successful strategies that you or your colleagues have developed and implemented.

Marking the Text: *Social Science*

This Strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs.

① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.

② As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

You might circle...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key concepts • lesson-based content vocabulary • concept-based vocabulary • words that signal relationships (i.e. <i>This led to...</i> or <i>As a result...</i>) • names of people • names of historical events • dates • numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
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3. Underline the author's claims and other information relevant to the reading purpose.

While reading informational texts (i.e. textbooks, reference books, articles, or journals), read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task. Relevant information might include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • central claims • evidence • details relating to a theology, philosophy, or ideology • facts about a person, place, thing, or idea • descriptions of a person, place, thing, or idea • cause and effect relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
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Here are some strategies to help students identify essential information in the reading:

- Read the introduction to the primary or secondary source.
- Scan the text for visuals, vocabulary, comprehension questions, or other reading aids.
- Review your notes for key concepts.
- Preview chapter or unit reviews.

Note: If you are not working with consumables, consider photocopying sections of a text that are essential to writing assignments, course content, exams, or other class activities.

Marking the Text: *Science*

This Strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs.

① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.

② As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

You might circle...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key concepts • content-based vocabulary • lesson-based vocabulary • names of people, theories, and/or experiments • properties • elements • formulas • units of measure • variables • values • percentages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
--	---

3. Underline the author's claims and other information relevant to the reading purpose.

While reading informational texts (i.e. textbooks, reference books, articles, or journals), read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task. Relevant information might include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns • Claims • Data • Definitions • Descriptions • Evidence • Examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations • Guiding language • Hypotheses • "If-Then" statements • Main Ideas • Methods • Processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
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Here are some strategies to help students identify essential information in the reading:

- Read the introduction to the chapter, lab, or article.
- Scan the text for visuals, vocabulary, comprehension questions, or other reading aids.
- Review your notes for key concepts.
- Preview chapter or unit reviews.

Note: If you are not working with consumables, consider photocopying sections of a text that are essential to labs, course content, exams, or other class activities.

Marking the Text: *Mathematics (Word Problems)*

This Strategy has four distinct marks:

1. **Number the paragraphs.**

① When reading a word problem that is only one paragraph, number each sentence. ② For longer word problems, start with 1 and count by fives (1, 5, 10).

2. **Circle** key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

You might circle...

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• action words• sum, add, more than• multiply• simplify• divide• difference, subtract• units• amounts• values• percentages• variables• formulas• solve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____
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3. **Underline** verbal models.¹

You might also underline...

- A process
- Definitions
- Descriptions
- Explanations

4. **Box** the question.

draw a box around the question.



Marking the Text: *Fiction*

This Strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs.

① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.

② As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

2. Circle descriptive words and names of people, places, and things.

You might circle...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vivid language • Concrete nouns • Names of characters • Names of places • Vocabulary • Word choice • Diction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
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3. Underline descriptions, figurative language, or other information relevant to the reading purpose.

While reading fictional texts (i.e. novels, short stories, or poems), read carefully to identify information that is relevant to the reading task. Relevant information might include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analogies • Literary devices • Characterization • Dialogue • Imagery • Context clues • Descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
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Note: If you are not working with consumables, consider photocopying passages of texts that are essential to class discussions or closing activities. For example, if you want students to write an essay where they examine the monologues of a certain character, you might consider photocopying those places in the text where the monologues take place. What other passages would you like to have available for students to mark?

Marking the Text: *Non-fiction (Argument)*

This Strategy has three distinct marks:

1. Number the paragraphs.

① Before you read, take a moment and number the paragraphs in the section you are planning to read. Start with the number one and continue numbering sequentially until you reach the end of the text or reading assignment. Write the number near the paragraph indentation and circle the number; write it small enough so that you have room to write in the margin.

② As with page numbers, paragraph numbers will act as a reference so you can easily refer to specific sections of the text.

2. Circle key terms, cited authors, and other essential words or numbers.

In order to identify a key term, consider if the word or phrase is...

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| • repeated | • used in an original or unique way |
| • defined by the author | • a central concept or idea |
| • used to explain or represent an idea | • relevant to one's reading purpose |

3. Underline the author's claims and other information relevant to the reading purpose.

A claim is an arguable statement or assertion made by the author. Data, facts, or other backing should support an author's assertion.¹ Consider the following statements:

- A claim may appear anywhere in the text (beginning, middle, or end).
- A claim may not appear explicitly in the argument, so the reader must infer it from the evidence presented in the text.
- Often, an author will make several claims throughout his or her argument.
- An author may signal his or her claim, letting you know that this is his or her position.

Ultimately, what you underline and circle will depend on your reading purpose. In addition to marking key terms and claims, you might be asked to mark other essential information such as the author's evidence, descriptions, stylistic elements, or language in the text that provides some insight into the author's values and beliefs.



Marking Argument

Numbering Paragraphs and Circling Key Terms

The following excerpt offers sample markings and brief descriptions of those markings. Notice the reading purpose for the excerpt. Without a reading purpose, young readers—especially those new to this strategy—will not know what to circle.

 AVID Weekly
Division of Education Services

Don't Compromise the Safety of Biotech Drugs

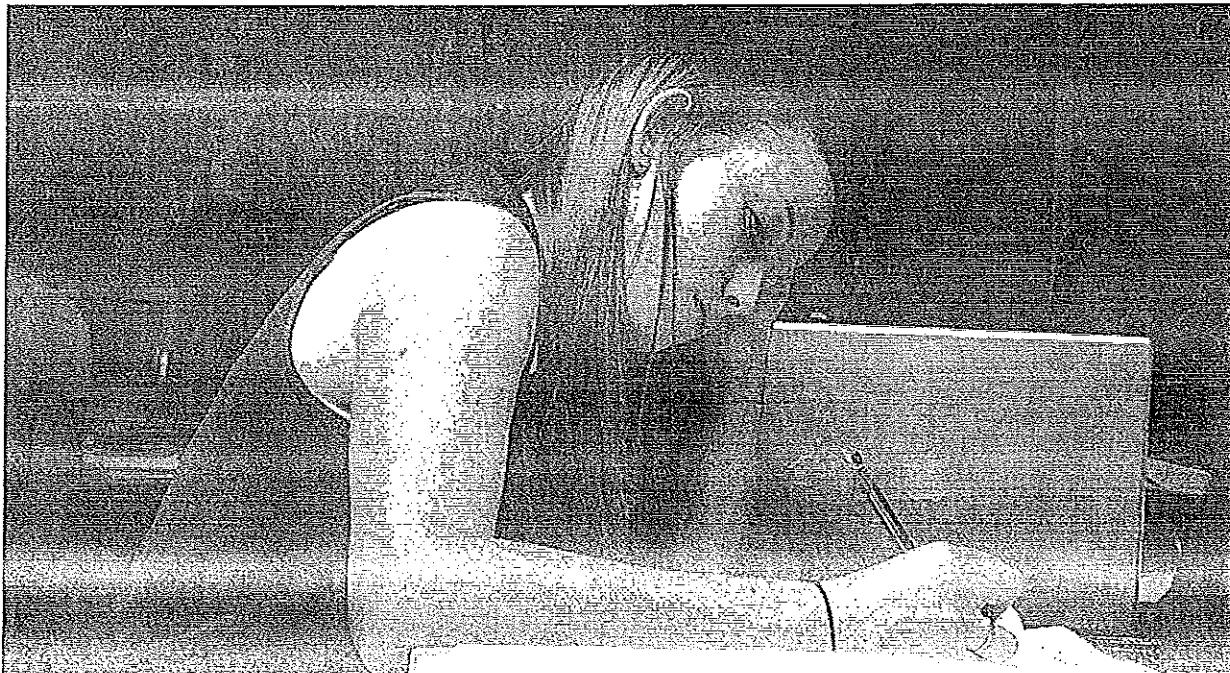
By Bryan A. Liang

Reading Purpose:
Number the paragraphs and circle key terms in the text.

- ① The comparison is worth keeping in mind as the debate heats up over "follow-on" biologics. Biologics are today's most advanced medicines, fully tested biotechnology protein drugs that provide targeted therapy to victims of cancer and other diseases. Follow-on biologics are the second or subsequent versions, but they are not identical.
- ② U.S. spending on them reflects the importance of these drugs in medicine's arsenal. Biologics represent the fastest-growing sector in the medicines market, with more than \$30 billion spent each year. Indeed, the top five drugs in terms of Medicare expenditures administered in physicians' offices are biologics.

In this passage, Bryan Liang introduces "Biologics" and "follow-on biologics." The reader circled these terms because they are repeated and defined.

Liang is executive director of the Institute of Health Law Studies, California Western School of Law, and co-director of San Diego Center for Patient Safety at the University of California, San Diego's School of Medicine. LA TIMES-WASHINGTON POST--04-29-08 1252ET



Marking the Text

Numbering Paragraphs, Circling Key Terms, and Underlining Author's Claims



Ethanol's Failed Promise

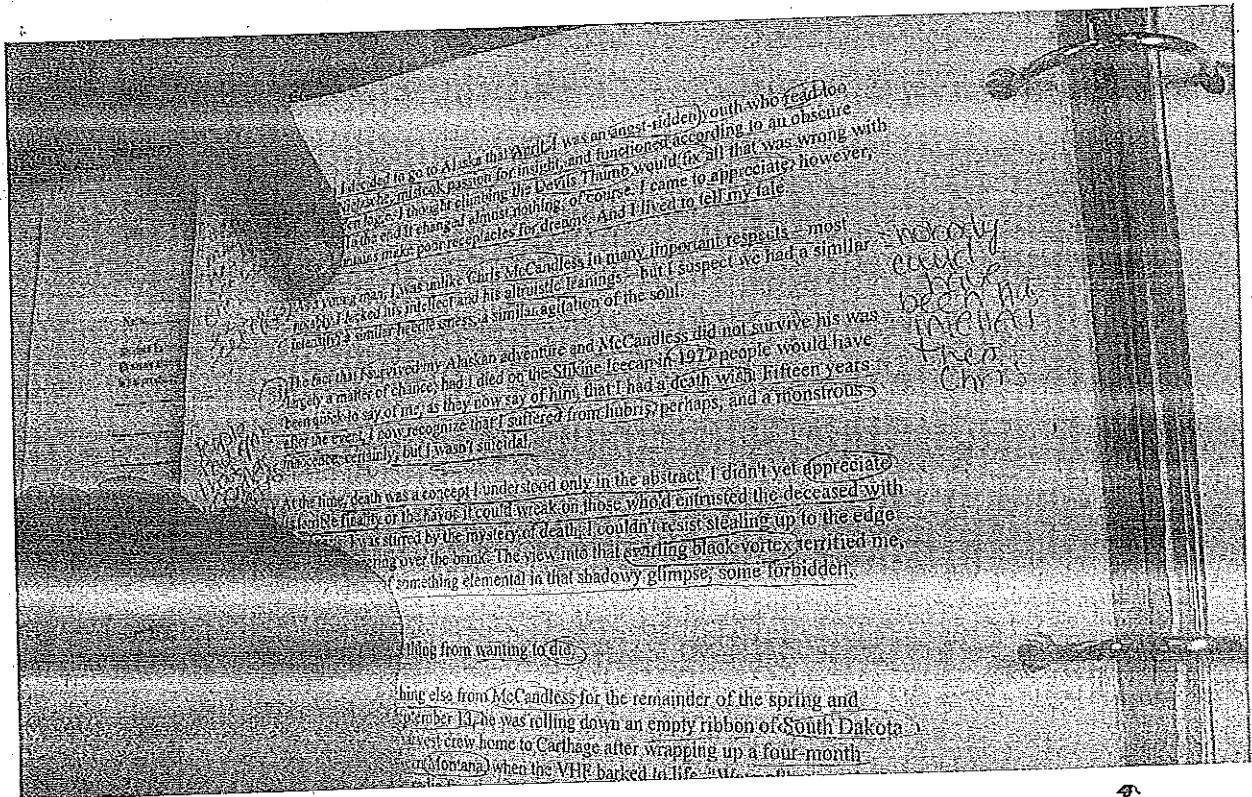
By Lester Brown and Jonathan Lewis

Reading Purpose:
Number the paragraphs, circle key terms, and underline the author's claims.

① The willingness to try, fail and try again is the essence of scientific progress. The same sometimes holds true for public policy. It is in this spirit that we call upon Congress to revisit recently enacted federal mandates requiring the diversion of foodstuffs for production of biofuels. These "food-to-fuel" mandates were meant to move America toward energy independence and mitigate global climate change. But the evidence irrefutably demonstrates that this policy is not delivering on either goal. In fact, it is causing environmental harm and contributing to a growing global food crisis.

Although words like "foodstuffs" and "biofuels" are not repeated, they are key terms because they directly relate to food-to-fuel mandates. In addition to the key terms, Brown and Lewis make a claim at the end of the paragraph.

"Ethanol's Failed Promise," by Lester Brown and Jonathan Lewis.
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Marking the Text

Additional Ways to Isolate Key Information

As students learn how to read and mark texts with greater proficiency, they will develop the need to expand their thinking about what to mark and how to mark it. As reading and writing assignments become more sophisticated, they will need to read a text for various purposes. The three original marks—numbering, circling, and underlining—may not offer enough flexibility for students who are reading for various purposes. For this reason, students should learn a few additional markings that will help them differentiate between one type of information and another. There are three new marks to consider:

[Bracket] information when underlining has been used for another purpose.

Students should use brackets to isolate relevant information that has not already been underlined. In fictional texts, students might underline descriptions of characters and bracket figurative language. While reading arguments, students might underline claims and bracket evidence. And in science, students might underline definitions and bracket data.

Write labels in the margins | claim

Writing labels in the margins is a strategy used by readers who mark the text and write in the margins. Labels are often double underlined so that they stand out from other marginalia (i.e. notes, comments, analysis, or drawings). When writing labels in the margins, draw a vertical line along the edge of the text in order to isolate the section of text being labeled. Readers will also use labels when charting the macrostructure⁹ of the text or when keeping track of shifts—places in the text where the author takes readers in a new direction or presents a new focus.

Box words when circling has been used for another purpose.

Sometimes readers need to keep track of two different types of words or ideas. For example, a reader might choose to circle key terms and keep track of an author's use of descriptive language. Having two distinct marks will make it easier to reference the material later.

Marking the Text

Deepening Understanding of Marking the Text

- Remind students that active reading becomes increasingly important as texts become more difficult. “Marking the Text” is a literacy skill that is used in high school and in college. It is a strategy designed to help readers gain greater comprehension of challenging texts.
- Increase opportunities for students to talk about marking the text. Students should discuss their markings as often as possible.
- Provide time for rehearsal; students must have time to practice this skill.
- Create opportunities for students to read and mark a variety of different texts. Reading assignments should vary in length, sophistication, and purpose.
- Ask students to share their markings with the entire class. You can have them stand at the front of the room and talk about one or two paragraphs or you can have them place their texts under a document camera and have them discuss their markings. This activity builds confidence and validates the work happening in the classroom.
- Call on volunteers to lead a *marking the text* exercise. Using either an overhead projector or a document camera, have one student at a time mark a section of the text while the rest of the students in the class watch and mark their texts.
- Collect texts that have been marked and write comments in the margins, explaining to the students what they are doing well and pointing to places in the text that they have overlooked or misunderstood.
- As students master this skill, they will need less guidance. Provide a reading purpose, but do not provide specific directions on how to mark the text. Eventually, students will need to learn how to effectively mark the text based on a given prompt provided by the teacher. Once students have completed the reading, ask questions such as, *How should you (or did you) mark this text? What did you circle/underline? Why did you make this decision?*

Extending Marking the Text Schoolwide

- “Marking the Text” is not limited to one discipline or one type of text. This skill is transferable to all academic classes and should be taught throughout the school day. As students learn how to use this strategy, ask them to think about how marking the text could be used while reading texts in other classes.
- Photocopy sections of a novel, short story, textbook, or other print materials that students could mark while reading. Students should experience applying this strategy to a variety of texts.
- Practice marking on sample state and local exams in order to teach students the value of active reading during testing situations. On the day of the exam, instruct your students to mark the text. The question will provide a reading purpose for each passage that the students are asked to read.

Use the lines below to record successful strategies that you or your colleagues have developed and implemented.

References:

1. “Marking the Text” is a strategy used by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies at San Diego State University.