

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
- defined by the author
- used to explain or represent an idea
- used in an original or unique way
- a central concept or 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.

¹Toulmin, S. The uses of argument. (2003). U.S.A.: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1958)