

Illinois Wesleyan's Writing Center Presents:

Glossing and Annotating

Glossing and Annotating are synonyms of one another, meaning they are defined in similar ways. They refer to writing a brief summary of a passage as a kind of shorthand or guide to the content or purpose of that passage. You may also gloss or annotate by highlighting, underlining, or circling important passages and writing quick notes or questions. It's useful as you edit, examine a challenging text, or return to relevant passages as we marshal our research for papers. Glossing and annotating helps writers understand what they have written, the relationships between their ideas, how to reorganize those ideas, which ideas need substantiation, and even how to rephrase some ideas.

Questions to Consider as You Gloss and Annotate

Question	How it Relates to Your Writing	How it Relates to Your Reading	Other IWU Resources
“What was written here? Can you put a label on this paragraph?”	When writers are asked to gloss their own writing, they often either name their ideas, or they identify the rhetorical function of the paragraph.	When readers are asked to examine a paragraph in this manner, they can see how the ideas connect and identify the function of the paragraph.	Writing Center Tutors can help here; schedule an appointment with one of them today!
“How many ideas are in this passage?”	This question asks writers to identify all the ideas in a section and gloss them, perhaps listing them in order. This work allows the student and tutor to group related ideas, reorganize the section, and probably elaborate on some of the points in newly-developed paragraphs.	In the same way that a writer can identify their own ideas, glossing them, a reader can identify the ideas of other, glossing them for related concepts, themes, and connections. They can also mirror the organization in their own writing.	Listing and mapping may be useful tools to use here. (See our Writing Process Handout)

<p>“What is the gist of this passage?”</p>	<p>This question, similar to WIRMI (What I Really Mean Is), forces writers to restate their ideas and to examine transitions between ideas. It's also a good way of doing "sayback," where you read your passage out loud and then say out loud its main idea.</p>	<p>You can “say back” when you read, too. If you pare down each paragraph of what you read, what is the main idea of each? What will you remember most? How will that idea/ memory inform what you write?</p>	<p>WIRMI is an opportunity to state your idea bluntly. Sometimes this method works if you’ve gotten particularly wordy in your writing. When you distill your paragraph to the most basic idea, what is that idea?</p>
<p>“What does this paragraph do?”</p>	<p>If you ask yourself this question, and formulate an answer, it's easy to start seeing which sections need greater explication or supporting material. This is like a storyboard, and a mapping tree can also be used with the answers you provide. If you're glossing on computer, you rearrange your list at this point. If you’re writing by hand, you may need to start a new list.</p>	<p>Particularly useful for critiques, this method allows you to examine the work of other authors, finding gaps or places where they need more supporting material or explanation/ analysis.</p>	<p>This is a good way of producing a (reverse) outline.</p>
<p>“What is missing?”</p>	<p>Ultimately, as you read over your own work, look back at your notes: what points did you think you were going to make? Should you still make them? Does your thesis still match? Should you change it? Answering these concerns will help you create a strong essay.</p>	<p>This method is useful as you read to consider what you expected the author to write that they didn’t include. It also allows you to provide a useful critique or analysis of work and pieces it might have left out.</p>	<p>One resource that can be helpful here is to consider the MEAL plan as you write.</p>

