By annotating a source, you are saving valuable time. If you have annotated notes, it means that you do not have to go back to that source and spend more time rereading it. If you only read it, skim and scan it, or underline a few things here and there, it will mean you have to go back to it another time, as you will certainly forget what you have read the first time around and may not even remember why you underlined or highlighted certain parts.

Annotating requires you to write out the information that you will potentially use in your paper. As you read, interact with the text by asking important questions and then trying to answer those questions. To get the important information from the text, you may need to summarize, paraphrase, and record quotations. Make sure to take down the page numbers of the text, because if you do not, and you want to use that quote, for example, you will need to go back and read the whole text again to try to find that page number, which means you are wasting valuable time.

While annotating, keep notes as to the purpose of the source. That is, is the source providing supporting evidence, counter evidence, supporting arguments, counter arguments, or refutations of counter arguments. It will be much easier to use your notes if they are clearly headed and you know how to use them in your paper.

As you read, have your laptop open, use a notebook, or even keep index cards. This will help you to have notes that are clear and structured. Although this may seem time consuming at first, it will save you a great deal of time in the long run.

Be aware that the length of your annotations is not fixed. How many notes you need and how detailed those notes are will be determined by how much information is in the source. Ask

yourself critical thinking questions to guide you as to how much annotation best suits your

purpose. Your own honest answers to those questions will be your best guide.