

# Underlining Effectively!



Many students have never correctly learned how to underline a textbook. Many do underline, but the process is usually “feast or famine.” Some underline almost every word; others, only a few words that don’t help them. Because of the large amount of reading a college student is expected to do, it is important that he/she learns the skill of underlining.

## Suggestions

- Never underline until you have read the entire paragraph. After reading the paragraph, decide which is the main idea, and what the supporting details are.
- Select your own words to underline. It is not necessary to underline each word in the sentence. Just the core parts will be sufficient to get the full meaning.
- Use a variety of marks. You may want to underline the main idea phrases, circle important names, etc. Once you have decided on your own system, it is important to remain consistent.
- Write summaries in the margin using your own words. These wordings can be helpful when reviewing, as they direct you immediately to the main ideas of the page.
- Review markings. After finishing your assignments and before you close your book, review the markings you have made. This will serve as a quick review and also give you a chance to take brief notes, if you wish.

## Caution!

- Like any other skill, underlining is a tool, not a cure-all for getting through college. It will take concentrated practice to develop this skill, but the time you will save in the future will be worth every minute of practice!

## Example 1 (Incorrect)

Political theory (often called “political thought,” “political ideas,” “political philosophy,” or “theory of state”) is that branch of political science which attempts to arrive at generalizations, inferences, or conclusions to be drawn from the data gathered by other specialists, not only in political science and the social sciences, but throughout the whole range of human knowledge and experience. Political theory may be called the “so what?” department-- the place where findings by statisticians, psychologists, historians, and all the rest of the researchers and tabulators maybe weighed, tied together, cross-referenced, and contemplated, to the end that meaning and significance may be extracted from this mountainous mass of data. “Facts-- even if demonstrably incontrovertible-- do not, by themselves, point to any single, inescapable course of action. The function of the political theorist is to consider facts in all their varied ramifications and at least suggest conclusions, remedies, and public policies. This is not to say that most scholars in the field of political theory do in fact come to grips with all or most of our contemporary problems and suggest remedies. Indeed, too many of them rake over the ashes of the dead past. But if only a small proportion labor toward integrating our tremendous and rapidly growing fund of political knowledge, they perform an invaluable service in this age of overspecialization.

## Example 2 (Correct)

Political theory (often called “political thought,” “political ideas,” “political philosophy,” or “theory of state”) is that branch of political science which attempts to arrive at generalizations, inferences, or conclusions to be drawn from the data gathered by other specialists, not only in political science and the social sciences, but throughout the whole range of human knowledge and experience. Political theory may be called the “so what?” department-- the place where findings by statisticians, psychologists, historians, and all the rest of the researchers and tabulators maybe weighed, tied together, cross-referenced, and contemplated, to the end that meaning and significance may be extracted from this mountainous mass of data. “Facts-- even if demonstrably incontrovertible-- do not, by themselves, point to any single, inescapable course of action. The function of the political theorist is to consider facts in all their varied ramifications and at least suggest conclusions, remedies, and public policies. This is not to say that most scholars in the field of political theory do in fact come to grips with all or most of our contemporary problems and suggest remedies. Indeed, too many of them rake over the ashes of the dead past. But if only a small proportion labor toward integrating our tremendous and rapidly growing fund of political knowledge, they perform an invaluable service in this age of overspecialization.