

## Morse Code Method

With the Morse Code Method of active reading and notetaking, you use Dots and Dashes to assign importance to information in your course readings, then organize those Dots and Dashes into paraphrased notes.



### Prime

Identify the purpose of the reading. Do you need to be able to answer questions about the reading, generate and submit your own questions about the reading, or use the reading to write a paper?

Review the Abstract, Objectives, Chapter Summaries, etc. before tackling the whole reading. Pay attention to the first and last sentences of each paragraph. Notice bolded or emphasized terms, definitions, or examples.

### Dot

If you read a sentence that seems to be laying out a major idea, especially something you saw in the Abstract, Objective, or Summary section(s) during your pre-reading, put a Dot next to it in the margin.

### Dash

For examples or explanations that support the major (Dot) idea, put a Dash next to it in the margin.

### Process and Question

In the end, your article will be a sequence of Dots and Dashes, like a Morse Code message. Now you can “decode” the reading.

Review the sentences that you dotted and dashed. You’ve broken down the reading into sequences: a major idea followed by examples or supporting information. As you read through, you can erase or re-assign Dots and Dashes as needed.

As you begin to take notes, paraphrase the Dot/main idea in your own words. This paraphrase is key: it forces you to *process* the idea in your brain, not just reproduce it. For each of the Dashes you’ve indicated, paraphrase the example or explanation in a bullet point.

As you take your notes, include specific questions you may have. Is there something that isn’t clear, even after you’ve tried to paraphrase it? Is there an example you don’t understand? Keep track of areas where you may be confused. Use those questions to help guide further research, or bring them to your instructor.

### Condense

Review your notes, and ask yourself: What is the main question being asked in the article, and what is the conclusion the author points toward? This will help you identify the big picture ideas that can help you during class discussions, on exams, and writing essays.