

## SMART TEXT HIGHLIGHTING

The purpose of highlighting or applying colour in your syllabus is to make important words or phrases stand out, to **distinguish between essential and additional information**. If you highlight too much you no longer see the essence and there is no point in applying colours. Do you feel insecure if you highlight too little? Then use a pencil to underline important phrases. This way you avoid turning your syllabus into a colouring book and it will still look well-organised.

Smart highlighting is done in **three steps**.

1. **Highlight** (parts of) **titles and subtitles** in order to show the structure of the syllabus.

Follow the same procedure as in the table of contents. Highlight only the essence and apply the same colours. E.g. Use orange for level 1 titles, green for level 2 titles, underline level 3 titles. Maintain this structure in all your courses.

2. **Read** the part of the **text** for the first time (without highlighting).

Not highlighting until the second reading will make it easier to see the essence.

3. Underline or **highlight key words** or short phrases in your text.

Do not rush, underline or highlight gently and only those words or phrases that are important. It is all about the essence. Don't turn your syllabus into a colouring book. Marking half of the course fools you into thinking that you have worked a lot, but it doesn't really help you at all.

Key words are often technical terms, words you need to know and be able to explain. You can often recognise them because:

- they stand out visually (e.g. bold, italic, underlined...),
- they often appear in the lesson,
- they are sometimes announced by signal words,
- they are mentioned in the title.

Below you will find some more **tips from research** on marking (Dunlosky et al., 2013):

- The **quality** of highlighting is crucial. Don't highlight too much and only the essence. The better you master the technique, the better the effect of highlighting.
- Highlighting can have a negative effect on establishing links because the attention is drawn to individual terms. This encourages remembering facts rather than establishing links. You cannot do **one without the other**. The 'schematising' phase helps you establishing those links.
- Highlighting is useful as part of the study process, **not as an isolated study strategy**. So use your highlighted words as a basis to build on (see also section 'schematising').