

KINDLE NOTES, HIGHLIGHTS AND ANNOTATIONS

One of the most underrated features of Amazon's Kindle is the ability to highlight passages of text to save for later. If you've never done it before, just use the five-way joystick up or down when on a given page of a book and click it in at the beginning of your passage, scroll to the end of the text you want, and click it again. You can even type out your own notes and commentary by just tapping on the keyboard after highlighting the text and hitting "Save note."

Where in the olden days you'd have to underline passages that caught your fancy (or highlight them, if you were particularly sophisticated and appropriately equipped), the Kindle catalogs your notes in a way that's much easier to access after the fact than photocopying pages or (heaven forbid) copying out passages by hand. For full-time students or just studious readers, this can be an invaluable tool if you learn how to use it correctly.

You can access your notes and marks from the Kindle itself, but if you plug it in to your computer, they're all available in a simple text file that you can then copy and paste into Microsoft Word and work with. With your Kindle plugged in, go to "My Computer" on your desktop and double-click on the Kindle in the list of devices. Go into the "Documents" folder and locate the file called "My Clippings.txt." The notes are then sorted by the book they belong to and the date they were taken.

Honestly, though? If I were a student, I would probably find that barely sorted text file scarcely navigable, especially for the purpose of studying certain important passages. Luckily, there is another way! I originally derided the Kindle for PC application, because to me it seemed to defeat the whole point of buying the e-Reader to begin with. In the context of notes and marks, however, it's a godsend.

If you've installed the Kindle for PC application, just double-click the book you want to look at, click the "Show Notes & Marks" button in the top right corner of the menu, and you'll get a column on the right side of the screen showing all of your highlighted passages and notes in chronological order. When you click on an individual highlight or note, it pulls up that page in the text and highlights the words in their original context. Your notes appear as blue icons on the page that can be selected with a click. If I had a complaint, it's that you can't directly copy text out of the application, but I suppose that's to be expected as an anti-piracy measure.

This is really one of those features that you never knew you needed until you use it. Once you start scribbling notes on your books, it's hard to stop!