THE EXCERPT

IN BRIEF:

- Recording the most important statements of a text
- Objective: Have acquired knowledge at hand for further work steps
- Written in such a way that you do not have to read the original text again.

WHAT IS PART OF EXCERPTING?

Preparation:

- Relevance check: Why are you interested in the text? Is it relevant to your research question? Does it correspond to your level of pre-knowledge? In order to find out, you can look at the following aspects: Title, author, year of publication, table of contents, introduction & conclusion, bibliography, index.
- Make a literature index card or an entry in a database (e.g. Citavi, Bibliographix).
- Activate prior knowledge by formulating questions: Formulate W-questions to the text (e.g. questions beginning with What, Who, How, Why, What for, Who, Where, When).
- For books: Decide which passages are relevant to your research question. Caution: Be aware of the structure of the document so that you do not randomly take passages out of context.

What you should excerpt:

- Fundamental texts for your degree course
- Texts that could become important again at a later date (exams, thesis)
- Passages from texts that are particularly important for your current paper

How to excerpt:

- First of all, always note the complete and exact reference on the excerpt sheet, with location and signature. On each new sheet, you should note the author with a short title (on the PC: use the headline function!).

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Further steps vary, because there are different ways of excerpting. Depending on the discipline, the chair and the purpose of the excerpt, different forms can be useful. There is no one form of excerpt. If necessary, please find out exactly what the chair for whom you are to prepare excerpts understands by this type of text. In the following you will find some hints on three excerpt formats: tabular excerpt, citation excerpt and paraphrasing excerpt:

Tabular excerpt

- Main purpose: Facilitate an overview of the text, preparatory work for an excerpt in a continuous text.
- After a quick read-through, divide the text into sections.
- For each section, write down in a table: page numbers, topic, main statement or meaningful citation and function of the section as well as comments (e.g. terms looked up, further thoughts).

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page number from - to</th>
<th>Topic/ headline of the text section</th>
<th>Main message of the text section</th>
<th>Function of the text section in the paper</th>
<th>Notes/ Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p. 1 - p.2</td>
<td>Introduction to excerpting</td>
<td>The excerpt is a method for sustainable text indexing.</td>
<td>The first text section introduces the topic of &quot;excerpting&quot;.</td>
<td>Looked up the term: Lat. Excerpt = extract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citation excerpt:

- Main purpose: To reproduce the most important statements in a way that is as citable as possible, and to have specific terminology ready for citation.
- At the beginning of the excerpt, briefly state the context and purpose of the text in your own words (approx. 10% of the excerpt).
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- In the main part, original citations make up approx. 60-70% of the excerpt. Between the citations you write transitions and briefly summarise what is not so important (approx. 10% of the excerpt).
- You should always write out important terms in connection with the corresponding verbs or adjectives ("professional habitus").
- Your own questions and criticisms can be formulated at the end of the excerpt (approx. 10% of the excerpt).

PARAPHRASING EXCERPT:

- Main purpose: To develop the text thoroughly and precisely through your own formulation work.
- You excerpt close to the text, but in your own words and paraphrases. You write out citations only sparingly in order to avoid a "patchwork of citations" in your work and to facilitate your understanding of the text.
- To do this, first skim the text and look up unknown words.
- Then read the text thoroughly and excerpt it as follows:
  - When excerpting for a specific research question, you formulate the answers that the text gives to that question.
  - For a general excerpt, you formulate the topic in passages as a subheading and then a formulated main statement for the examined section. You then formulate these sentences as continuous text, which already indicates that it is the author's argumentation and not your own opinion ("The author states that...").
  - You should always write in complete sentences, because when listing keywords or sentence fragments, important connections are easily lost and you do not notice what you have not yet fully understood. In any case, you should at least record the main lines of argumentation of the text, central concepts and theses in complete sentences.
  - If you paraphrase: Always use a reference or, if you feel confident, use the subjunctive I to indicate that it is a reproduction of the text!
WHAT IS THE POINT OF FORMULATING IN YOUR OWN WORDS?

"What we cannot express in our own words remains foreign. What we cannot formulate comprehensibly, we have not yet understood properly. Only when we can reproduce a theory or contexts in our own words we are able to deal with this theory and to do something with the insight of these contexts." (from: Franck, Norbert, Lust statt Last: Wissenschaftliche Texte schreiben, in N. Franck, J. Stary, eds., Die Technik des wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh: Paderborn 2003, p.124)

"Citations are not a substitute for work. Many students find it difficult to detach themselves from the texts they have written, to express a fact in their own words. They line up citation after citation and formulate only connecting sentences. The result is a patchwork of citations - not an independent paper. (...) A string of quotations is often an expression of the fact that the author is not yet able to grasp the subject." (ibid., p. 150).

References:
Schwarz, Anna, Handout zum Exzerpieren an der Professur für Vergleichende politische Soziologie der Europa-Universität Viadrina
Staudenmaier, Katharina (2014): Präsentationsportfolio zur Peer-Tutoring-Ausbildung, Dokumentation zum Ausbildungsteil Hochschuldidaktik

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