

How do I know what to highlight in an article?

Highlighting is a lot like power dating—you look through one article after another, snagging the good bits mixed in with all the junk. In order to truly maximize your highlighting time, you want to start with articles that hold a good chance of having thorough content.

The easiest way to do this is start with material from quality sources. These include Foreign Affairs, The Economist (mag., London), Foreign Policy—especially their authors. Do not look at Time, USA Today, or Newsweek; unless you have already highlighted 500 articles by more credible sources, do extemp commentary as an event, and come from a leisurely district.

Familiarity with the kind of content that various sources have, simply comes with time and experience. Whenever possible, include a source from the topic country, agency, Party, etc.

Once you have a good stack of articles on a broad range of topics with a variety of sources, you are ready to begin. (When selecting the proper highlighter, it should allow the words to be easily read, while being easy on the eyes. I always used a variety of colors, because I got bored easily. Two men I know, who both made it to finals at NFL Nationals two years in a row, both will only use neon yellow highlighters. There may be something to this…)

A problem many Novi seem to encounter is highlighting far too much per article. When you only have approximately twelve minutes to compose an extemp speech, you can not afford to waste your time rereading through one paragraph after another of neon blobs. Only dash color on the essentials. These include: who, what, when, where, why, solutions, and statistics. In better quality sources, you will find unique insites/ analysis, proverbs, stories, and sayings which might be useful—but when in doubt, leave it out. Embedded sources are also worth highlighting, especially when your variety of sources on the subject is limited. Sources you should highlight include Doctors/ Specialists, area-specific analysts, ministers of relevant subject or country, and general intellects like professors.

After a few tournaments while developing your highlighting style, it will become more obvious what is and is not useful. Keep in mind there is more junk than gold—so be selective. Why do you think extempers use “gold” highlighters?—We’re compensating.