

## CHARTING METHOD

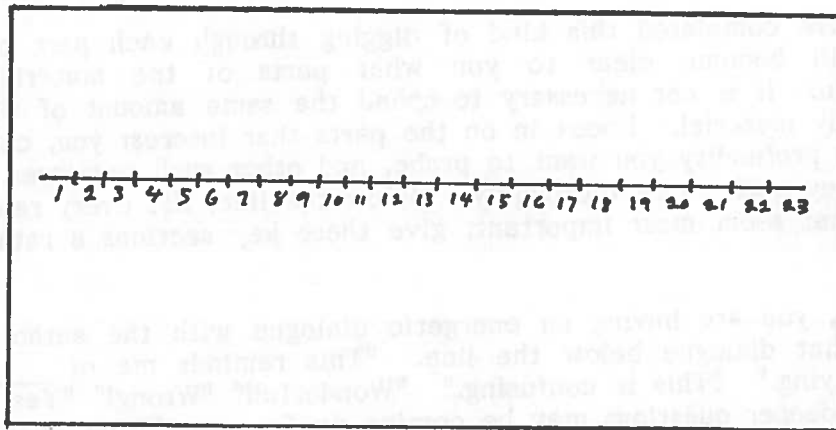
Charting is a method for the study of written material. It is a sophisticated method that can be used for all types of study. It is a life method that can be applied to living itself. Our intent here is to share a simplified version of charting that can be easily used to prepare a few pages of a book, essay or article for group study.

Charting is both an individual study method used to prepare for the group study and a process that the group can do together during their common study period. We will describe the individual aspect of charting here and the group process in the next section called "seminar methods."

The basic intent of building a chart is to give the reader an overall visual picture of the written material being studied. This visual picture emphasizes the structure of the author's thinking. Charting is a discipline of mind which focuses the reader's attention on the author's points rather than allowing the reader's mind to drift off into misleading thoughts and associations. A chart is also the reader's artistic creation -- a personalized, innovative picture of the author's thought. Doing a chart need not be seen as an added burden placed on top of reading: charting is a means of study that can increase the fun of study and the depth of understanding.

Here are the steps in the charting method.

1. Number the paragraphs (or sections) in the study material.
2. Turn a whole piece of paper sidewise and draw a line across it about 1/3 the distance down from the top.
3. Divide the line into the same number of segments as the number of paragraphs (or sections) found in the study material in step 1. If there were 23 paragraphs, your chart would look like this:

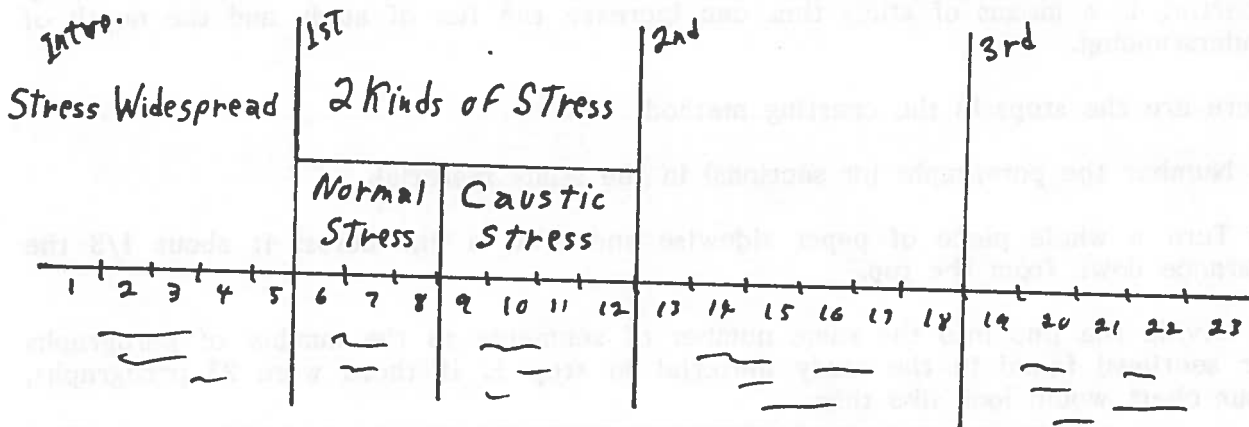


4. Now the chart building begins. Use the top part of the page to hold structural insights. Use the bottom part of the page to note subpoints within the paragraphs. Start by scanning the whole piece of study material for obvious structural breaks and record them above the line as divisions of the whole into its subparts. For example, if you come across a paragraph that begins with the words "In the first place", draw a vertical line on your chart on the left side of the space you have numbered to correspond to that paragraph. You can assume that everything to left of that line is some sort of introduction. And you can begin looking to the right of that line for where this "first place" ends and the author's "second place" begins. It is sometimes possible to sketch out the major parts of

the study material without having read more than a few words.

5. Now you begin digging down into each of these larger sections. Read the material with questions like these in your mind: What is the introduction about? What points has the author introduced? What are the key words he/she is going to define and talk about? Ask similar questions about the other sections. What is this "first place" section all about? etc. These questions help keep your mind focused, like a curious detective looking for clues. Any answers you find should be noted on the chart. Put them below the line if they are content. Put them above the line if they are structural insights like "first", "second", "third", "finally", "on the other hand" and other such clues that indicate structural divisions of the material.

6. As such data builds up, you can begin giving titles to the various sections that have emerged. For example if the introduction turns out to be about "stress being widespread in our culture", put above the line in the space that you have marked off as introduction a few words that help you recall that. You might simply put "stress widespread." The second section of the chart might be seen to be about "2 kinds of stress." And that second section might be sub-divided into two sections called "normal stress" and "caustic stress." Your chart now looks like this:



7. When you have completed this kind of digging through each part of the study material, it will become clear to you what parts of the material are most important to you. It is not necessary to spend the same amount of time on each part of the study material. Focus in on the parts that interest you, challenge you, puzzle you with profundity you want to probe, and other such responses. Now read and chart the key parts more thoroughly. Below the line, list every relevant point; star the ones that seem most important; give these key sections a rather thorough treatment.

8. At this point, you are having an energetic dialogue with the author. You can note some of that dialogue below the line. "This reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_." "This is a clarifying." "This is confusing." "Wonderful!" "Wrong!" "Yes, but!" and so forth. Also, deeper questions may be coming up for you: "What does the author really mean by \_\_\_\_\_?" "How does this relate to what the author said earlier?" Such questions guide you in your further study of the material. Pursue these questions: look at your chart and at the parts of the written material that might answer your questions. Note your discoveries on the chart.

9. At this point, your chart may be getting quite messy with all kinds of insights. Don't worry about it. This is your dialogue: and a chart is not meant to win an art contest. However, if your own clarity could be improved (and better preserved) by redrawing the whole chart in a neater, clearer and more artistic fashion, then do so. Use colored pens if you like.