

GUIDELINES FOR AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

An annotated bibliography is a list of reference citations, each followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative summary of the source. The purpose of the summary, called the annotation, is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

An annotated bibliography does two important things:

1. it gives a bibliographical entry to all your sources
2. it summarizes the contents of each source

Please note: your instructor may give you guidelines that differ from the following. Always follow your instructor's direction when it differs from suggestions found in supplemental instructional materials. If you have questions about the specifics of your assignment, always ask your instructor for clarification and direction.

The first part of each source in an annotated bibliography, the citation, will look the same as a citation you would place in a works cited, reference, or bibliography page. You will follow the formatting dictated by the specific required style (MLA, APA, etc.).

The second part of each source is the annotation. This is the summary the writer crafts about the source. Some annotated bibliographies may just summarize the source, some may assess or evaluate the source, some may reflect on the usefulness of the source for the project at hand, and some may require you to craft a combination of these or more techniques.

In general, the annotation should describe the essential details of the source, and do the following:

- Explain the main purpose
- Briefly describe the contents
- Indicate the possible audience
- Note any special features
- Warn of any defect, weakness, or suspected bias

When writing an annotated bibliography, you should consider the author's credentials, sources, research methodology, significance and clarity of purpose, and affiliation with a professional organization.

Also keep in mind that an annotation is not the same as an abstract. Many scholarly sources will have an abstract included at the beginning of the article. First, to use the abstract as your annotation is plagiarism. Second, an abstract is purely descriptive where an annotation is much more than just a summary of the article.

