

Preparing an annotated bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is an alphabetical list of research sources (e.g. books, journal articles, etc.) with brief descriptive and evaluative comments (usually 100-200 words long) about each source. These comments are known as *annotations*.

An annotation usually contains a brief summary of content and/or a short evaluation. Depending on your assignment you may be asked to reflect, summarize, critique, evaluate or analyze the source. Students are often asked to complete an annotated bibliography as a step to completing a larger research project. This provides a good opportunity to sort through your most important sources and review them before incorporating them into a research paper.

As with a normal reference list or bibliography, an annotated bibliography is arranged alphabetically according to the author's last name.

Typically, each entry in an annotated bibliography should include the following:

- Complete bibliographic information (i.e. citation) for your source. Check with your instructor to determine which documentation style is required (APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian, etc.)
- A brief summary of the main points and/or thesis of the work. What are the main arguments? What is the point of the book or article? What topics are covered?
- Any strengths or weaknesses you have identified. Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective?
- Why the source is relevant to your topic and its usefulness in terms of your research project
- Information about the author's background or credentials
- Mention of any significant special features (e.g., glossary, appendices, particularly good index)

Examples:**Sample entry for a journal article using MLA format:**

(from <http://uwc.ucf.edu/files/handouts/Annotated-Bibliography-Handout-Fall2011.pdf>)

Greene, Stuart. "Mining Texts in Reading to Write." *Journal of Advanced Composition* 12.1 (1992): 151-67.

This article works from the assumption that reading and writing inform each other, particularly in the matter of rhetorical constructs. Greene introduces the concept of "mining texts" for rhetorical situations when reading with a sense of authorship. Considerations for what can be mined include language, structure, and context, all of which can be useful depending upon the writer's goals. The article provides some practical methods that compliment Doug Brent's ideas about reading as invention.

Sample entry for a book using APA format:

(from http://sydney.edu.au/science/hps/undergraduate/resources/annotated_bibliography_guide.pdf)

DeGrandpre, R. J. (1999). *Ritalin nation: rapid-fire culture and the transformation of human consciousness*. New York: W.W. Norton.

This book provides an argument against viewing Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) as a biological condition. DeGrandpre, a professor of psychology, argues that the effectiveness of Ritalin in treating ADD does not conclusively prove that the disorder has a purely biological foundation. Studies with Ritalin have shown that it improves the efficiency and attentiveness of children (and adults) whether or not they have been diagnosed with ADD. The author describes ADD as a condition resulting from our hurried society with its emphasis on speed, and Ritalin as an unsatisfactory quick-fix, thus providing an argument against biological explanations for ADD and in favour of a socio-cultural one. Although his thesis is persuasive, it is not supported by original research or even systematic analysis of psychological/psychiatric literature, but is based on generalized observations. However, it does provide an important perspective on the context in which 'new' behaviour disorders emerge, and the implications of whether we consider them to be biologically or culturally mediated.

For additional information on writing annotated bibliographies, see these other helpful guides.

- **“How To Write Annotated Bibliographies”** (Memorial University Libraries)
http://www.library.mun.ca/guides/howto/annotated_bibl.php
- **“How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography”** (Concordia University Libraries)
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/annotatedbibliog.php>
- **“Writing an Annotated Bibliography”** (University of Manitoba Libraries)
http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/dafoe/media/annotated_bibliography.pdf
- **“Annotated Bibliography”** (Online Writing Lab, Purdue University)
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>
- **“How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography”** (Cornell University Library)
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>
- **“Write an Annotated Bibliography”** (UC Santa Cruz University Library)
<http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-an-annotated-bibliography>
- **“Annotated Bibliographies”** (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)
http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/annotated_bibliographies.html