

# Annotated Bibliography

## Definitions

**Annotation** = a concise summary or evaluation of the value or relevance of a source

**Bibliography** = an alphabetical list of sources

## What is it?

An annotated bibliography is a combination of the two elements above. It provides bibliographic information on a particular source, plus a paragraph that summarises and evaluates the content of the source. Depending on the assessment task, your paragraph may vary in length from about 150 words. Clarify the length with your lecturer.

## Why write one?

Depending on the assessment, your purpose for writing an annotated bibliography may be to:

- review the literature of a particular subject;
- demonstrate the quality and depth of reading that you have done;
- show the range of sources available—such as journals, books, web sites and magazine articles;
- highlight sources that may be of interest to other readers and researchers;
- explore and organise sources for further research.

When set as an assignment, an annotated bibliography allows you to become more familiar with material published on a particular topic. Given that, it is a useful task to undertake to increase your understanding of a topic.

## Structure

An annotated bibliography generally contains five parts:

1. A full citation of the source (using a referencing style relevant to your course, e.g. APA, Chicago, etc.)
2. A general statement about the author's purpose for writing the source
3. A short summary of the content
4. An evaluation of the content
5. Your reflection on the usefulness of the source

The table overleaf outlines the parts you need to include in an annotated bibliography. Alongside each part are suggestions for sentence starters.

## The five parts of an annotated bibliography

PARTS	FOR EXAMPLE
<p><b>CITATION</b> Citation information is in the same format as the reference list, including the hanging indent. Leave a line below the citation.</p>	<p>Griffiths, T. (1996). <i>Hunters and collectors: The antiquarian imagination in Australia</i>. Cambridge University Press.</p>
<p><b>PURPOSE</b> Write a short statement of the author's viewpoint or purpose for writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this article, Griffiths reviews ...</li> <li>• This article examines ...</li> <li>• The authors describe ....</li> <li>• The author's purpose is to challenge ...</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUMMARY</b> Write a short summary of the theory, research findings or argument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a study, describe the participants, methods, results and any relevant data.</li> <li>• Use the structure of the source to help you structure your annotation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main ideas expressed are ...</li> <li>• Support for these claims are documented ...</li> <li>• Smith has conducted a thorough investigation of ...</li> <li>• The author's research focuses on ...</li> </ul>
<p><b>EVALUATION</b> Comment on the usefulness and/or limitations of the text for your research or the discipline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critique the source for objectivity and reliability.</li> <li>• Evaluate the evidence the author has used to support the ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The author provides a strong theoretical ...</li> <li>• The writing style considers a range of audiences ...</li> <li>• Theories are supported by well-known researchers in this field, such as ...</li> <li>• There is a lack of supporting evidence ...</li> <li>• The main limitation of the study is ...</li> </ul>
<p><b>REFLECTION</b> Comment reflectively on the work, showing how it will fit into your research on your topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How useful was this source?</li> <li>• Did this add to my understanding of this topic?</li> <li>• How helpful is this source for others in this field?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is useful for my research topic ...</li> <li>• As the information is up-to-date and from a reliable source ...</li> <li>• It is relevant to my essay because ...</li> <li>• In particular, this article will assist ....</li> </ul>

(Adapted from UNE, 2013; Example given in APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition)

### Sample annotation

The following table contains a sample annotated bibliography.

Refer to the key that lists the necessary parts of the structure, and examine each corresponding number to see how they can be combined into a paragraph.

Follow this pattern for each source to create an annotated bibliography.

KEY	SAMPLE ANNOTATION
(1) Citation (APA style)	(1) Trevor, C.O., Lansford, B., & Black, J.W. (2014). Employee turnover and job performance: Monitoring the influences of salary growth and promotion. <i>Journal of Armchair Psychology</i> , 113(1), 56-64. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.2825">https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.2825</a>
(2) Short statement of authors' viewpoint/ purpose	(2) In this article, Trevor et al. review the influences of pay and job opportunities in respect to job performance, turnover rates and employee motivation. (3) The authors use data gained through organisational surveys of blue-chip companies in Vancouver, Canada, to try to identify the main causes of employee turnover and whether it is linked to salary growth. Their research focuses on assessing a range of pay structures such as pay for performance and organisational reward schemes. (4) The article is useful to my research topic, as Trevor et al. suggest that there are numerous reasons for employee turnover and variances in employee motivation and performance. The main limitation of the article is that the survey sample was restricted to mid-level management, thus the authors indicate that further, more extensive, research needs to be undertaken to develop a more in-depth understanding of employee turnover and job performance. (5) This article will not form the basis of my research; however it will be useful supplementary information for my research on pay structures.
(3) Short summary of the research	
(4) Evaluative comment on the usefulness to your particular topic and/or limitations	
(5) Reflective comment showing how it will fit into your research	

(Adapted from UNSW, 2012; Sample given in APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition)

## Additional sources

Queensland University of Technology. (QUT). (2014). *Writing an annotated bibliography*. Retrieved August 21, 2014 from <http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/write/annotatedbibliography.jsp>

University of New England. (UNE). (2013). *Writing an annotated bibliography*. Retrieved April 13, 2013 from [http://www.une.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/11132/WE\\_Writing-an-annotated-bibliography.pdf](http://www.une.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/11132/WE_Writing-an-annotated-bibliography.pdf)

University of New South Wales. (UNSW). (2012). *Annotated bibliography*. Retrieved April 15, 2013 from [http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/annotated\\_bib.html](http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/annotated_bib.html)

## Other helpsheets available

- Quick Guides on In-text Referencing (APA, Australian Harvard, Chicago/Turabian, IEEE and MLA)
- Writing in an Academic Style
- Reading and Writing Critically
- Paraphrasing