

Annotated Bibliography: Health

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	EXAMPLE
<p>CITATION</p> <p>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>PURPOSE</p> <p>Write a short statement of the author's viewpoint or purpose for writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this article, Griffiths reviews ... • This article examines ... • The authors describe ... • The author's purpose is to challenge ...
<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>Write a short summary of the theory, research findings or argument.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a study, describe the participants, methods, results and any relevant data. • Use the structure of the source to help you structure your annotation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main ideas expressed are ... • Support for these claims are documented... • Smith has conducted a thorough investigation of ... • The author's research focuses on ...
<p>EVALUATION</p> <p>Comment on the usefulness and/or limitations of the text for your research or the discipline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique the source for objectivity and reliability. • Evaluate the evidence the author has used to support the ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author provides a strong theoretical ... • The writing style considers a range of audiences ... • Theories are supported by well-known researchers in this field, such as ... • There is a lack of supporting evidence ... • The main limitation of the study is ...
<p>REFLECTION</p> <p>Comment reflectively on the work, showing how it will fit into your research on your topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How useful was this source? • Did this add to my understanding of this topic? • How helpful is this source for others in this field? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is useful for my research topic ... • As the information is up-to-date and from a reliable source ... • It is relevant to my essay because ... • In particular, this article will assist ...

(Adapted from UNE, 2013; Example given in APA 7th 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) Mallett, C., & Hanrahan, S. (2004). Elite athletes: why does the 'fire' burn so brightly? <i>Psychology of Sport and Exercise</i> , 5, 183-200. https://doi:10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00043-2
(2) Short statement of authors' viewpoint/purpose	(2) Mallett and Hanrahan examined Self Determination Theory (STD), which identifies the social and contextual conditions that create a motivational climate, to discover what motivates elite athletes to perform at such a high level. Athletes usually experience either intrinsic or extrinsic motivational factors to inspire them to demonstrate their competence at an elite level. (3)
(3) Short summary of the research	The authors conducted qualitative interviews with 11 track and field athletes (who had received medals in the Olympics and Commonwealth Games) to gather data on motivational forces. Data from these interviews indicated that all of the elite athletes were mainly intrinsically motivated. They were highly driven by personal goals; had strong self-belief; and their sport was central to their lives. From the findings of this study, Mallett and Hanrahan concluded that when elite athletes accomplished their goals, it enhanced their perception of their competence, which positively influenced self-determined motivation. (4)
(4) Evaluative comment on the usefulness to your particular discipline and/or limitations	Although the study supported earlier research in the area, the authors acknowledged that further studies on motivational influences are necessary to provide more substantial documentation. (5)
(5) Reflective comment showing how it will fit into your research	This article will be useful for my research into the factors that shape motivation, especially around personal goal setting.

(Adapted from UWF, 2019; Sample given in APA 7th 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

University of Western Florida. (UWF). (2019). Annotated bibliography. Retrieved July 22, 2019 from <https://libguides.uwf.edu/c.php?g=215270&p=5671239>

Other helpsheets available

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