

How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

Goal: This Directed Learning Activity is intended to introduce you to writing an annotated bibliography and it will help you become familiar with terms, definitions and applications of the concepts surrounding the topic.

Activities: This portion of the Directed Learning Activity is meant to be done independently. This portion will include activities such as exercises, games, Power Point presentations, and/or other lessons that show applications of the topic. You should print all materials used and take notes on anything you learn in this Directed Learning Activity.

1. So, you have to write an annotated bibliography. Let's start with the obvious question: What *is* an annotated bibliography? If we break down the phrase, we start with the word **bibliography**, which is simply **a list of research sources, such as books, journals, or websites**. An **annotation** is **a note that explains or describes something**. Therefore, an **annotated bibliography** is **a list of sources that have been given brief analytical descriptions**.
2. The first step in writing your annotated bibliography is to read the assignment carefully. Some professors will want a summary of what you've read; others will want you to assess and evaluate your sources. It's important to clearly understand what your professor wants.
3. Now, you need to have a topic in mind before you start your research. **Write your topic or thesis statement here:**

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4. Next, it's time to collect your sources. Again, refer to your assignment. If you're required to find books, start with the library book catalog. If you need articles, use the library databases. (You can also refer to the DLAs on peer-reviewed articles and keyword/Boolean searching to help you find your sources. These DLAs are available through the Learning Center's website).

As you gather your sources, it's important for you to keep track of your **citations**. A citation is information about your source – so, the author's name, title, and publishing information. For a journal article, you'll need the author's name, article title, journal title, volume and issue numbers of the journal, the year it was published, and the page numbers of the article. For a book, you'll need the author's name, title, the year it was published, and the name and location of the publisher.

Another thing to keep in mind as you keep track of your citations is what style manual your professor wants you to use. They could require you to use MLA, APA, or Chicago. These style manuals simply dictate to you how to write your citation. Both the Tutoring Center and the library have resources to help you understand how to write your citations.

For this assignment, record 5 citations for your annotated bibliography on the lines below or in a separate word document. Make sure to consult your manual of style to make sure you format the citation correctly. This is an important step and it will save you a lot of future headaches.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

5. Now that you've gathered your citations into a list, it's time to read your sources and write about them. **An annotation should summarize the central theme of a book or article.** When you're done reading your book or article, ask yourself, "What's the main point that the author is making?" If someone were to ask you what the article was about, what would you say?
6. If your professor has asked you to do more than summarize – if you also need to **critically evaluate the article** – then, you will want to think about the following questions:
 - What is the author's background? Is he or she qualified to write about this subject?
 - Who is the intended audience? Was it written for a general audience or for experts in the field?

- Does the author attempt to be unbiased or is he or she clearly trying to advance an agenda?
 - Is there a unique point of view? If it is a new article, is the information relevant or outdated?
 - How does this particular work contribute to the topic of your bibliography? How does it compare or contrast to the other sources in your bibliography?
 - Any other questions your instructor may have asked you to consider.
7. While annotations cover a lot of information, they are generally quite short. At this point, you will need to check your assignment for a word limit. Has your professor indicated how long or short the annotation should be? This can be the trickiest part of the assignment: fitting all of the information required of you into a small space. For help with condensing your writing into fewer words or sentences, make sure to visit the Tutoring Center on the first floor of the library. They have writing tutors who can help you learn to say more with fewer words.
8. To help you have a better idea of what an annotated bibliography should look like, **visit and read the following two web pages:**
- This page gives you an annotated bibliography example that summarizes the steps listed above:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/02/>
- This page gives you a sample so that you can see what a real one looks like:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/>
9. After reading, summarizing, and critically evaluating your first source, repeat the process for the rest of your sources. **For this Directed Learning Activity, you need to provide an annotation for all five sources that you cited above.** Attach your typewritten work to this assignment sheet.
10. Here's a review of all the steps you will need to follow for your annotated bibliography:
- ✓ Read your assignment and know what your professor wants.
 - ✓ Gather your sources.
 - ✓ Make a list of your citations. Remember to use the correct citation method (MLA, APA, or Chicago).
 - ✓ Summarize your source.
 - ✓ If your professor asks you to, critically evaluate your source.

Review: With a tutor at the Writing Center, discuss specific terms, their definitions, and all of the examples you have written. Make sure to be clear about your understanding of the definitions, and the examples you have given. Clarity will be gauged by your use of specific terms you learned during the Activities portion of this Directed Learning Activity. **In order to pass this Directed Learning Activity, you must show a tutor your completed annotated bibliography for five sources. It should be cited correctly according to MLA, APA, or Chicago and the annotations should conform to your professor's instructions.**