

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES with SAMPLES

An annotated bibliography is a Bibliography, References, or Works Cited page that contains valuable descriptive notes about the individual sources. Typically, annotations include a **brief summary** of the source, a description of the **relevancy and validity** of the source, and/or a summation of how the writer (you) **plan to use the source** in your research paper.

Instructors typically assign annotated bibliographies to evaluate the sources you plan on using and to make sure you are planning appropriately for your research paper. Annotated bibliographies also are good organizational tools to help you **outline** your paper and to help you **discover gaps** in your research. The MLA and APA style guides do not include guidelines for formatting an annotated bibliography.

Follow traditional MLA (8th edition), APA (6th edition), or Chicago style for your citations.

Typically, annotations are short (around 150 to 200 words for the entire entry) and will give the following information in this order:

- 1) A **summary** of the source material, including the source's thesis and main ideas— Remember that a summary should be in your own words. You should not use direct quotations or need to cite information for an annotated bibliography unless given specific instructions from your instructor.
- 2) An **assessment** of the source—How valid is the source? What are the credentials of the authors? Is the source reliable? Does the source offer recent research? Is the source biased or objective? How does this source compare to other sources in your bibliography?
- 3) Finally, **explanation and reflection** on how you plan to use this source in your paper— Was the source helpful to you? How does it help shape your argument? Has it changed your stance on your topic? Sometimes, after evaluating a source, you may realize that you cannot use the source in your research paper. It is okay to make that assessment, and you would include that conclusion at this point in your annotations.

Your annotations may include all or some of these annotations depending on your professor's instructions. Your annotations may be in separate paragraphs after the citation, or they may be in one paragraph after the citation. ALWAYS REFER TO YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDELINES OR ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR REGARDING SPECIFICATIONS ON HIS/HER ASSIGNMENT. Some instructors want an annotated bibliography simply with sources and annotations; others want to see the thesis statement or even an entire introductory paragraph ahead of the annotated bibliography.

Annotated Bibliographies – Samples

Sample MLA Annotation

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anchor Books, 1995.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun.

Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective, its down-to-earth humor, and its encouraging approach.

Chapters in this text could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style engaging.

In the sample annotation above, the writer includes three paragraphs: a summary, an evaluation of the text, and a reflection on its applicability to his/her own research, respectively.

Sample APA Annotation

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

In this book of nonfiction based on the journalist's experiential research, Ehrenreich attempts to ascertain whether it is currently possible for an individual to live on a minimum wage in America. Taking jobs as a waitress, a maid in a cleaning service, and a Walmart sales employee, the author summarizes and reflects on her work, her relationships with fellow workers, and her financial struggles in each situation.

An experienced journalist, Ehrenreich is aware of the limitations of her experiment and the ethical implications of her experiential research tactics, and reflects on these issues in the text. The author is forthcoming about her methods and supplements her experiences with scholarly research on her places of employment, the economy, and the rising cost of living in America. Ehrenreich's project is timely, descriptive, and well-researched.

The annotation above both summarizes and assesses the book in the citation. The first paragraph provides a brief summary of the author's project in the book, covering the main points of the work. The second paragraph points out the project's strengths and evaluates its methods and presentation. This particular annotation does not reflect on the source's potential importance or usefulness for this person's own research.

Sample Chicago/Turabian Annotation

Davidson, Hilda Ellis. *Roles of the Northern Goddess*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Davidson's book provides a thorough examination of the major roles filled by the numerous pagan goddesses of Northern Europe in everyday life, including their roles in hunting, agriculture, domestic arts like weaving, the household, and death. The author discusses relevant archaeological evidence, patterns of symbol and ritual, and previous research. The book includes a number of black and white photographs of relevant artifacts.

This annotation includes only one paragraph, a summary of the book. It provides a concise description of the book's project and its major features.

These sample annotated bibliographies were obtained through the following source:

"Annotated Bibliography Samples." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/03/>. Accessed 22 June 2017.