How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography or is a bibliography (a list of books, online sites or other works) that includes descriptive and evaluative comments about the sources cited in your paper. These comments are also known as annotations.

How do I format my annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography entry consists of two components: the Citation and the Annotation.

Citation

The citation should be formatted in the bibliographic style that your instructor has requested for the assignment. Some common citation styles include APA, MLA, and Chicago. For more information, see the various Style Guides online.

Annotation

Generally, an annotation is approximately 150-300 words in length (one paragraph). However, your instructor may have different expectations so it is recommended that you clarify the assignment guidelines.

An annotation may include any or all of the following information:

- A brief summary of the source
- The source's strengths and weaknesses
- Its conclusions
- Why the source is relevant in your field of study
- Its relationships to other studies in the field
- An evaluation of the research methodology (if applicable)
- Information about the author's background
- Your personal conclusions about the source

Samples:

- Hanging Indents are required for citations in the bibliography, as shown below. That is, the first line of the citation starts at the left margin, and subsequent lines of the citation are indented 4 spaces.
- The annotation is indented 2 additional spaces, as a block.
MLA (Modern Language Association) Style


The author researches several federal and state firearms regulations and their effect on the everyday citizen. By testing his hypothesis that firearms regulations have an inherent effect on everyday citizens, findings yield in support of the hypothesis. In contrast, Johnson cited in an earlier study the complete opposite findings.


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.