

ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION INFO SHEET

Academic Writing: Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography contains a number of references to books, articles, magazines or other documents on a specific topic. An annotated bibliography includes descriptions and explanations of your listed sources as well as the basic citation information you usually provide in a reference list. All of the sources have to be connected or related to each other, usually around the topic or question you are answering or researching.

Learn about:

- the key aspects of the annotated bibliography
- tips for ensuring you are critical in your approach.

See **Info Sheets** about critical thinking and APA referencing.

An annotated bibliography is both descriptive and analytical. It aims to do two things:

- summarise a number of related sources
- evaluate the quality and relevance of the sources for a specific purpose.

It also demonstrates that you have the basic skills and knowledge of searching and evaluating sources for academic work.

The structure of the annotated bibliography should generally contain these key features:

- the full bibliographical details before each annotation (just like a citation in a reference list)
- no additional in-text references, as you are discussing only that source in the annotation
- annotated bibliography entries are organised in alphabetical order, by the author's surname
- concise sentences to a maximum of 150 words for each annotation
- several sections: an annotation and a justification (sometimes search strategy or reflection)
- grammatically correct sentences; avoid long or complicated sentences
- writer's own words using academic language and correct use of technical and content words
- demonstration of knowledge and understanding, as well as evidence of critical thinking or evaluation of the sources, both of which require analysis and judgement of the sources.

Students can fall into the trap of being too descriptive in their annotated bibliography. This description often includes a summary of the key ideas and features of the article, and is therefore important, but it should only be a small part of the annotation. It is not critical or analytical enough to be an evaluation of the source. We have provided five key areas or principles for you to follow when reading your sources, and when note taking for your annotated bibliography.

The following five elements need to be considered when you read an article and may be blended and integrated into a full paragraph without headings.

Currency: <i>date the information was created or published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a newer/older edition? <input type="checkbox"/> When was the material written or revised? (The material may be older than publication date.) <input type="checkbox"/> Do you need recent information or will older material be suitable for your purpose? <input type="checkbox"/> If the source is a web page, when was it last updated? Do the links work?
Coverage: <i>what information is provided in the article</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Can you give an explanation of main points, the main argument and/or purpose of the work? What is its thesis? <input type="checkbox"/> If someone asked what this resource was about, how would you answer? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the article provide in-depth coverage of your research topic? <input type="checkbox"/> Is it broad, providing an overview, or specific?
Authority: <i>expertise, qualifications, experience</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the author or publisher qualified/reputable? <input type="checkbox"/> Do the author's credentials specify that he/she is from a university or other research organisation? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the article peer reviewed? (i.e. by a professional body) <input type="checkbox"/> If the resource is a web page, is it a sponsored page? Who is the sponsor? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the work affiliated with a reputable institution or association or organisation? Objectivity can be affected by the organisation?
Objectivity: <i>a lack of bias, judgment, or prejudice</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the resource give only one side of the argument? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the author seem to have particular biases or are they trying to reach a particular audience? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the article contain cited references that demonstrate that the conclusions are based on the work of other experts?
Relevance: <i>significance or usefulness to your research</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> How in-depth is the material? Does it cover only part of the topic? <input type="checkbox"/> Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? <input type="checkbox"/> How can you use this source in your research project? <input type="checkbox"/> Has it changed how you think about your topic? <input type="checkbox"/> Does it offer anything new? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the information accurate?

More Info

To look at some examples go to University of New South Wales Learning Centre and read the Annotated Bibliography section http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/annotated_bib.html

QUT Library: Study Smart provides a useful module: Evaluate your information <http://studysmart.library.qut.edu.au/module3/>

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