



Writing an Annotated Bibliography

Writing an annotated bibliography helps you to create proper references, evaluate your sources, and make sure you have everything you need *before* you write your paper.

Once you have an annotated bibliography, writing the paper is much easier.

Each source in an annotated bibliography has three main elements: the reference, the summary, and the commentary. The commentary is comprised of an evaluation and a reflection. This is how you write an annotated bibliography:

STEP 1: Devise your research question. What exactly do you want to know about your subject? This will help you to narrow your research. Next, conduct your research to find answers to your question.

STEP 2: Create APA (or other citation style, depending on instructor preference) references for your sources. If you are having difficulty with your references, try the citation tool in most databases or the APA Style Blog (<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/>). Here is a sample reference for an online journal article:

Jerrentrup, A., Mueller, T., Glowalla, U., Herder, M., Henrichs, N., Neubauer, A., & Schaefer, J. R. (2018). Teaching medicine with the help of “Dr. House.” *PLoS ONE*, *13*(3), Article e0193972. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193972>

STEP 3: Place your sources in alphabetical order by the author’s last name.

STEP 4: Summarize each of your sources. To do this, first check the length of your source. If your source is short, put the sentences together and revise so your paragraph is clear and concise. If your source is long, do the same thing, but for sections or groups of paragraphs. With these methods, you should arrive at a solid summary that communicates the main ideas without unnecessary details. Here are some additional things to keep in mind:

- Present the source accurately and impartially
- Keep the summary brief
- Avoid quoting the source
- Write in third person (Do not use I/we/you)

STEP 5: Evaluate the quality of your sources. Remember, your credibility as a writer rests on the credibility of your sources. This evaluation should be comprised of two to four sentences. Here are some questions to guide you:

- Is this information reliable? (Check the evidence)
- Is this source current? (Not outdated)
- Is the author credible? (What is their background?)
- Is the source objective or biased?
- Is the publisher/journal/periodical reputable?

STEP 6: Reflect on how this source will be used in your paper. Your reflection should be comprised of two to four sentences. Here are some questions to guide you:

- How does this source answer your research question?
- How does this source shape your understanding of the subject?
- How is this source different from your other sources?
- Does this source repeat information contained in other sources?
- How will you use this source?

If you follow these steps, you should have a fantastic annotated bibliography. Even better, you will be ready to write a solid paper.