

Writing Annotated Bibliography Entries

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a helpful tool for researching, organizing, and ultimately selecting sources for a writing assignment. They help you collect concise notes from your research and reflect on each source's credibility and usefulness for your upcoming essay. Most annotated bibliography entries include four pieces of information about each source:



Bibliographic Entry

Create an entry for the source as it would appear on a References (APA) or Works Cited (MLA) page.

Summary

Describe the source's main idea(s) in your own words.

Credibility

Describe the quality of the source and the credibility of its author(s).

Relevance

Justify why this source is relevant and applicable to the topic of your essay.

Not so sure where to start? Use the prompts below to start drafting your bibliography entry!

For your summary, consider:

- What is the content (focus) of the source?
- What main takeaways would you want someone who did not read/view the source to know?
- What conclusions does the source come to?
- Who is the audience of the source?

When discussing credibility, ask yourself:

- How reliable is the author? Do their background and credentials demonstrate expertise in your topic area?
- What biases might be influencing the author's perspective?
- What methods were used to collect information within the source?
- How reliable is the host of the source (academic journal, website, newspaper, etc.)?
- Is this source an outlier compared to other sources you are looking at? Or, does this source align with similar perspectives?
- How current is the source? Is the information current or outdated?

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In order to address relevance to the assignment, think about:

- How is this source useful to your assignment?
- Which section(s) of your essay can you use this source to support?
- What limitations does the source have?
- Is there anything you disagree with or are critical of?
- What is your point of view? An annotation can go beyond descriptive information.

But wait! There are more tips:

- Annotated bibliographies are arranged alphabetically by the first word of each entry, which is usually the author's last name.
- Be sure to be brief and include only directly significant information that is relevant to your research topic.

Here's an example:

Bibliography Citation:	Sewell, W. (1989). <i>Weaving a program: Literate programming in WEB</i> . Van Nostrand Reinhold.
Summary:	Sewell explains the code language within these pages including certain lines of code as examples. One useful idea that Sewell uses is to explain characters and how they work in the programming of a Web Page. He also goes through and describes how to make lists and a title section. This will be very useful because all web pages have a title section. Sewell has written multiple books on the topic of computer programming. This author also introduces Pascal which I am not sure I will include in my manual, but after I read more about it, I can decide whether this will be helpful to future users. This book will not be the basis of my manual but will add some key points, which are described above.
Credibility:	
Usefulness:	

Note: Before following the prompts above, be sure to review your assignment prompt. Instructors vary on their expectations for annotated bibliographies. Some instructors want each of these components in one paragraph, while others will want three paragraphs. Other instructors might be looking for two paragraphs with only two of the above topics addressed. It is very important to use this handout as a general guide for meeting the specifications outlined by your instructor.