

Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations for books, articles, and other documents. Following each citation is a brief, descriptive, and evaluative paragraph or two about the source. The paragraph should include information about the source such as its accuracy, relevancy, and quality.

Steps for creating an annotated bibliography:

1. Locate a variety of sources for your topic. Look through the sources and choose those that will be most useful.
2. Cite the book, article, or other document in the appropriate style (MLA, APA, Turabian, etc.).
3. Write a brief, evaluative annotation for each text. An annotation is a commentary or a critical explanation of a text. Annotations should be written in paragraph form. Each entry should include:
 - a. Summary: Include a concise statement about the major theme or purpose of the text
 - i. Summarize the main ideas, purpose, and arguments.
 - b. Assessment: Give an assessment of the source.
 - i. Look at author's authority and intended audience
 - ii. Compare/contrast with other sources in bibliography. Is the source biased or objective?
 - c. Reflection: Give an explanation of how the source will be used in the paper.
 - i. How is it helpful to you?
 - ii. How does it affect your argument?

****Annotated bibliographies may include some or all of these parts. Check with your professor for the specifics of your assignments.****

(Sample bibliographic entries on back)

The following example uses MLA format for the annotated bibliography:

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: 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, offering 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 both engaging and enjoyable.

MLA annotations generally include a summary, assessment, and personal reflection of the work.

The following example uses APA format for an annotated bibliography:

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 Wal-Mart 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.

APA annotations focus on a summary and an assessment of the work. Personal reflections are sometimes, but not always, included.