

Writing an annotated bibliography

An annotated bibliography provides a brief overview of the available research on a topic. You may be required to briefly summarise the research sources and/or assess the value of the source and/or reflect on the validity of this source material for your assignment task. Each information source is accompanied by a citation that is followed by a brief paragraph. When you write an annotated bibliography, you will need to consider:

1. Purposes
2. Format
3. Writing style
4. Examples

NOTE: APA referencing style is used in this fact sheet.

1. Purposes

The task of compiling an annotated bibliography will help the researcher think about the relevance and quality of the material on a topic. Does the information meet the requirements of the topic? Is the information from a reliable and academically respected source?

2. Format

This will depend on the lecturer's requirements for the task. The bibliographical information may be **descriptive** (see points 1-3 below); or **descriptive+evaluative** (see points 1-5 below). The format should follow this order:

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1. Citation details (set out in the same style as a reference list item)
 2. A short statement that explains the main focus or purpose of the work
 3. A short summary of the theory, research findings or argument (e.g. intended audience, subjects covered, major arguments supported, research methods, conclusions reached, special features)
 4. Consideration of the usefulness and/or limitations of the text for your research (e.g. reliability of the text, credibility of the author, poor features, left-out content, weaknesses in argument)
 5. An evaluative comment on the work that may take into account how this work will fit into your research on a topic (e.g. critical comment, critical reflection that describes the usefulness or relevance of the information for your writing task).

3. Writing style

An annotated bibliography is a piece of formal academic writing and follows the general rules for all academic writing:

- Arrange in alphabetical order
- Write in a SINGLE paragraph (usually about 100-300 words, depending on the format but check with your lecturer)
- Write in full sentences using academic writing style
- Use transition words (e.g. furthermore, moreover, however, therefore ...)
- Be concise – mention only significant details in your summary
- Use examples from other annotated bibliographies to guide and check your writing style
- Do NOT repeat information (e.g. the title) that is already in your citation
- Do NOT cross reference i.e. use any in-text references as you are only writing about a single text.

4. Examples of annotated bibliography entries

When you compose your annotated bibliography, you will need to consider each part of the bibliography. Sentence starters can help you to focus your thoughts on these questions.

	The parts of a bibliography entry	Examples	
Descriptive steps 1-3	1	The citation information should be in the same format as it would be in the reference list - leave a line BELOW the citation	<p>Example of an APA reference</p> <p>Griffiths, T. (1996). <i>Hunters and collectors: The antiquarian imagination in Australia</i>. Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>For more information, see Academic Skills fact sheets on Referencing for the style required in your subject area.</p>
	2	A short statement of the author's viewpoint	<p>Example of sentence starters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *In this article, Johnson reviews . . . *This article examines . . . *The authors describe . . . *The author's purpose is to challenge . . .
	3	A short summary of the theory, research findings or argument	<p>Example of sentence starters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The main ideas expressed are . . . *Support for these claims is documented . . . *Smith has conducted a thorough investigation of . . . *The author's research focuses on . . .
Descriptive and evaluative steps 1-5	4	Comments on the usefulness and/or limitations of the text for your research	<p>Example of sentence starters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The author provides a strong theoretical . . . *The writing style considers a range of audiences . . . *Theories are supported by well-known researchers in this field, such as . . . *There is a lack of supporting evidence . . . *The main limitation of the website . . .
	5	An evaluative comment on the work, taking into account how this work will fit into your research on a topic	<p>Example of sentence starters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *This article is useful for the research topic . . . * Because the information is up-to-date and from a reliable source . . . * It is relevant to the thesis because . . . * In particular, this article will assist . . .

Words in bold are transition words that help you to connect your ideas in between sentences.

1	→	McFarlane, J.K. (1973). Standards of care—what do we mean by care? <i>Nursing Mirror</i> . 143(23), 40–42.
2	→	The article examines the meaning of the word 'care' within a nursing context.
3	→	The responsibility of nurses to provide care is legitimised in numerous documents, and the author goes on to identify key concepts related to nursing care. In particular , these concepts include assisting, helping and giving a service; offering this service to people who need help with daily living activities and to others who are affected by health deviations or illness of some kind. Moreover , the nurse's caring role is legitimised by the patients. Finally , the article concludes by relating how these concepts are put into operation by using the steps of the nursing process—assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating the patient's need for nursing care. The main limitation of the article
4	→	is that all of the research was exclusively conducted in large city hospitals.
5	→	Therefore , while the article is useful for an analysis of nursing care, the limitations of its research base will require some adaption to meet the needs of this assignment that requires a commentary on services in both city and country area hospitals. (172 words)