

# Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An *annotated bibliography* is a type of assignment essay whereby reference list entries are followed by short descriptions of the work called *annotations*. This type of bibliography provides a brief overview of the available research on a topic. For the annotation, you are usually required to briefly summarise a research source and/or assess the value of the source and its validity for your assignment task. Each information source starts with a reference item that is followed by a brief paragraph. To write an annotated bibliography, you will need to consider:

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

**NOTE:** Citation style  
APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Modify  
for other citation styles.

## 1. Purpose

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. Writing style

An annotated bibliography is a piece of formal academic writing and follows the general rules for all academic writing: The writing structure 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 paragraph should follow this order:

- 
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).

Include in-text citations if you refer to other works within the annotation paragraph.

## 3. Format

- Begin by writing the reference for the source in your reference list style (including hanging indent)
- Each annotation (about 100–300 words) should be a new paragraph below the reference entry
- 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
- Do NOT repeat information (e.g., the title) that is already in your citation
- Arrange your sources and summaries in alphabetical order
- Double space the complete annotated bibliography.

## 4. Examples

When you compose your annotated bibliography, consider each part of the annotation. 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.	<b>Example of a reference (APA style)</b> Griffiths, T. (1996). <i>Hunters and collectors: The antiquarian imagination in Australia</i> . Cambridge University Press.
	2	A short statement of the author’s viewpoint	<b>Example of sentence starters</b> *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	<b>Example of sentence starters</b> *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	<b>Example of sentence starters</b> *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	<b>Example of sentence starters</b> *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	McVenna, M.J., Smith, J., & Gant, P. (2019). Standards of care: A collective meaning for nursing. <i>Nursing Times</i> , 143(23), 40–42. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1188/106256204478">https://doi.org/10.1188/106256204478</a>
2	The article examines the meaning of the word ‘care’ within a nursing context. The responsibility of
3	nurses to provide care is well-documented in numerous medical reports, and the authors go on to identify key concepts related to nursing care. <b>In particular</b> , these concepts include assisting, helping, and giving a service and offering this service to people who need help with daily living activities and to others who are affected by ill health of some kind. <b>Moreover</b> , the nurse’s caring role is validated by the needs and expectations of their patients. <b>Finally</b> , the article concludes by relating how these concepts are put into operation by using the steps of the nursing process: assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the patient’s need for nursing care.
4	The main limitation of the article is that all of the research was exclusively conducted in large city hospitals. <b>Therefore</b> , while the article is useful for an analysis of nursing care, the limitations of its
5	research base will require some adaption to be an inclusive commentary on services in both city and country area hospitals. (178 words)

Fictional authors and text have been used for teaching purposes.