

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography lists sources that will be used for a particular project. Although some instructors may only require summative annotations, most want students to go a step further to include evaluative or critical content. The point of this assignment is to explain the content of your sources, assess their quality and accuracy, and determine their usefulness for your purpose. Pay careful attention to your instructor's requirements, as this assignment can vary in its specific approach. An annotation includes a complete citation, a summary and a critical evaluation.

A Good Annotated Bibliography

- Encourages you to think critically about the author(s) and content of the works you are using, their place within a field of study, and their relation to your own research and ideas.
- Proves you have read and understood your sources.
- Establishes your work as a valid source and you as a competent researcher.
- Situates your study and topic in a continuing professional conversation.
- Provides a way for others to decide whether a source will be helpful to their research if they read it.

Creating an Annotated Bibliography

1. **Locate** books, articles or documents that MAY contain useful information and ideas on your topic. **Briefly examine and review** the actual sources in order to choose the best ones that will provide a variety of perspectives and appropriate information for your topic.
2. **Cite each source** using the appropriate style, such as MLA or APA, according to your instructor, course and field. Follow the guidelines of that style carefully and make sure to include all required information. Keep careful records for yourself to be able to access the article in the future.
3. **Write a concise summary** of the main ideas of each source. No quotations from the original source should be used. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be four sentences to one paragraph in length.
4. **Write an evaluation** of the authority or background of the author, assess any bias, and determine the intended audience. Compare and contrast the information provided in this source with any others you are using. Make a critical evaluation of the source and its worth based on this information and add it to your annotation. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be two sentences to one paragraph in length.
5. **Explain** the relevance of the work, how it illuminates your topic, and how it will be used in your project. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be two sentences to one paragraph in length.
6. The summary and commentary may either be combined into one paragraph or placed in separate paragraphs, depending on length requirements or your instructor's guidelines.
7. The sources are usually organized alphabetically, but if a large number of sources are involved, can be organized by the subsections of the intended project. Write in third person.

Sample annotation – in MLA style

Sollors, Werner. "Owls and Rats in the American *Funnyhouse*: Adrienne Kennedy's Drama." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 63 (1991): 507-32.

Sollors summarizes seven of Kennedy's plays, paying particular attention to their imagery, especially the animal imagery. He draws from her autobiography to explicate the text of her plays, explaining what associations she had with some of the images. *Funnyhouse* is discussed in the most detail. Sollors provides a good analysis of the structure of *Funnyhouse*, saying that the repetition and the imagery provide a clear structure with three major rhetorical units: the "returning father," the "Roman ruins," and the "African saviour" (515). These units create a "rhythm...that deepens the themes of conflictual heritage, failed self-recognition, mission, sacrifice, decline, murder, and suicide without resolving these issues" (516). This is a good introductory essay, but not an in depth discussion of any one idea.

Sample annotation – in APA style

Kemp, F. (1998). Computer-mediated communication: Making nets work for writing instruction. In J.R. Galin & J. Latchaw (Eds.), *The dialogic classroom* (pp. 133-150). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fred Kemp, associate professor of English at Texas Tech University, is the author of this early investigation of the potential uses of network computing in teaching writing. Opening with a historical discussion of the perceived impact of the microcomputer on writing pedagogy, he notes that while machines lack the natural language capability to become graders of student papers, they have had great impact as network tools useful for facilitating peer review in writing instruction. Through a series of examples dating back to 1985, Kemp traces the impact of applied networking on collaborative learning theories. He further recalls his own work developing software for writing instruction at the University of Texas in the mid-1980s, which was a precursor to the computer-mediated communication [CMC]-based instruction that emerged in the 1990s. Giving examples of student responses to networked writing and peer review assignments collected in the 1990s, Kemp concludes by arguing that changes in communication technology will in turn require extreme changes to education methods. Although now dated, his 1998 argument was eerily prescient, and the article is useful in establishing an historical account of early applications of network technology on writing.

Note: the entire contents of your annotated bibliography should be double spaced. These examples are condensed for space.

