

WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

What is an annotated bibliography?

A standard annotated bibliography has two parts

- the bibliographic information
- the annotations

The **bibliographic information** is an alphabetical list, by author, date, publisher, volume, page number etc. of books, journals, etc. that you have read as part of your assignment.

The **annotations** follow each bibliographic entry and are summaries, evaluations of, and reflections on, the main points of the book, chapter, article, etc. you have read.

Why write an annotated bibliography?

You may have to write a stand-alone annotated bibliography on a particular topic as part of an assessment for a unit.

Alternatively, you may decide to compile one as part of your Masters or PhD research process. It is a useful way to keep track of what you have read and what is significant for your research about a particular text.

Below is an example of an annotated bibliography entry by Shannon Kennedy-Clark, Tracey-Lee Downey and Pam Mort © 2006 The Learning Centre, The University of New South Wales.

¹ Trevor, C.O., Lansford, B. and Black, J.W., 2004, 'Employee turnover and job performance: monitoring the influences of salary growth and promotion', *Journal of Armchair Psychology*, vol 113, no.1, pp. 56-64.

² In this article Trevor et al. review the influences of pay and job opportunities in respect to job performance, turnover rates and employee motivation. ³ The authors use data gained through organisational surveys of blue-chip companies in Vancouver, Canada to try to identify the main causes of employee turnover and whether it is linked to salary growth. ⁴ Their research focuses on assessing a range of pay structures such as pay for performance and organisational reward schemes. ⁵ The article is useful to my research topic, as Trevor et al. suggest that there are numerous reasons for employee turnover and variances in employee motivation and performance. ⁶ The main limitation of the article is that the survey sample was restricted to mid-level management, ⁷ thus the authors indicate that further, more extensive, research needs to be undertaken to develop a more in-depth understanding of employee turnover and job performance. ⁸ This article will not form the basis of my research; however it will be useful supplementary information for my research on pay structures.

Key

1. Citation
2. Introduction
3. Aims & Research methods
4. Scope
5. Usefulness (to your research/ to a particular topic)
6. Limitations
7. Conclusions
8. Reflection (explain how this work illuminates your topic or how it will fit in with your research)

Tip

Make sure the bibliographic information is in the referencing style recommended by your discipline.

How long is an annotated bibliography?

They vary from a few sentences to a few paragraphs depending on the assignment requirements or your preference if you are doing it for your own purposes. 100-200 words is a common length.

What information do I include in the bibliography section?

All the information you would include in an end-of-essay/thesis reference list. Make sure you use the citation style accurately.

What information do I include in the annotation section?

Depending on your purpose, consider including the following information.

Summary

- The author's intention.
- The scope of the text.
- The main argument.
- The intended audience.
- The research methods.

Evaluation

- An assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, limitations of the text.
- An assessment of the theoretical concepts used.
- An assessment of the strength of the evidence.
- A comment on any biases you have observed.
- An assessment of the credibility of the authors/text.
- A comment on the readability of the text.

Reflection

- Your reaction to and/or perspective on the text.
- A comment on the suitability of the text for your research purposes.

Choose appropriate texts

When choosing texts to annotate, ask

- is this text relevant to my research?
- is this a key text on my topic?
- does this text cover new ground?

Points to remember

- Only mention significant details.
- Don't use in-text citations or footnotes.
- Write in sentences but be concise.
- Use academic vocabulary.

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