

Annotated Bibliography

Annotate (v): to add notes to (OED)

An annotated bibliography is, quite simply, a list of works cited, which includes notes on some or all of its sources. We call these notes **annotations**.

What is appropriate content for an annotation?

Each individual annotation should contain important details about the source in question, which are relevant to your research project. Which details are important may vary based on context, so it is always best to check your assignment or ask your instructor what information he or she would like you to include. However, the three most common methods of annotation are:

◆ The Pure Summary

For this type of annotation, the objective is to clearly and *concisely* summarize the content of the source. What is the main idea, thesis, or central argument? What are the most important supporting points, arguments, or examples used to defend the thesis? Be careful not to add your own arguments or evaluations to this annotation.

***Note:** The pure summary annotation is similar in content to an **abstract**, although the average abstract tends to be longer than the average annotation. An abstract is simply a summary of a secondary source, usually one paragraph in length, which includes the source's main idea and most important supporting points, arguments, or examples. Be careful not to add your own arguments or evaluations to an abstract.

◆ The Pure Critique

For this type of annotation, the objective is to *evaluate* rather than *summarize* the content of each resource. If you have formulated a working thesis, you may evaluate each resource for its relevance to your research project. In short, you will explain how you plan to use the resource to support your thesis and how the writer's argument relates to your own argument. The critique may also involve evaluating the quality of the resource's argument. How well does the writer make his or her point? Is the argument clear? Are all of the claims sufficiently explained and supported? Are there any important points which the writer fails to consider?

Example:

If you were using the DSM-V, which is an authoritative psychological diagnostic manual, to argue that the narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Telltale Heart" is suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, then your annotation for this resource might explain why you have chosen this resource over other psychological texts (it is the most authoritative) and how you plan to use it to support your thesis (the DSM-V lists diagnostic criteria for paranoid schizophrenia, which you can then apply to Poe's narrator in order to demonstrate that his symptoms are consistent with this disorder).

◆ The Mixed Summary and Critique

This type of annotation involves a mixture of summary and critique. Usually, you will summarize the resource first and then evaluate its quality. You may end by explaining how you plan to use this material to support your own thesis. Be clear in your writing about which ideas are taken from the resource and which are your own critiques.

Length

Annotation length is highly variable. Usually, an annotation will not exceed 150 words in length. Some annotations may be as concise as 1-2 sentences, while others may take up several paragraphs. It is important to make sure that all necessary information has been included without going into excessive detail. Always check your assignment and/or ask your instructor if you are unsure of the annotation length instructions for a given annotated bibliography assignment.

Formatting the Annotated Bibliography

Annotated bibliographies are formatted exactly like standard Works Cited pages in both APA and MLA format, with the exception that the title of the page will be “Annotated Bibliography” as opposed to “Works Cited” or “References.” Other than the page’s title, adding annotations only affects the formatting of the individual citations. For more information about how to properly format a Works Cited page as a whole, please refer to the MLA or APA handouts available in the Tutoring Center and online.

MLA Citations

In MLA format, annotations are added directly to the ends of the individual citations and formatted as extensions of the citations. This means that if the annotation runs over more than one line on the page, all subsequent lines should be indented 1”. Please note that some instructors prefer that MLA entries begin on a new line, so confirm the formatting with your instructor.

Example:

Suess, Barbara. “The Writing’s on the Wall: Symbolic Orders in ‘The Yellow Wallpaper.’”

Women’s Studies, vol. 32, no. 1, 2003, pp. 79-97. *MLA International Bibliography*.

Academic Search Premier, doi: 10.1080/00497870390171248. Accessed 21

September 2016. Suess argues that the narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s

“The Yellow Wallpaper” suffers from psychosis as defined in the theories of

psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This psychosis is triggered by the birth of the

narrator’s son because it forces her to confront the fact that, as a woman, she is

excluded from the “Patriarchal Order” of her society, meaning that she is unable

to reconcile her individual identity with her identity as a member of her

community. As a result, the narrator’s mind attempts to identify itself with other

external stimuli, such as the wallpaper, which drives her further into psychosis.

APA Citations

In APA format, annotations begin on a new line following the citation and indented 1”.

Example:

Mouilso, E. R., Tuerk, P. W., Schnurr, P. P., & Rauch, S. A. M. (2015, June).

Addressing the

Gender Gap: Prolonged Exposure for PTSD in Veterans. *Psychological Services*, 1, 1-8. doi: 10.1037/0000040.

This study evaluates the efficacy of prolonged exposure (PE) therapy for female veterans with PTSD. It observes a significant decrease in PTSD symptoms for female veterans following PE, and no significant difference in results between male and female veterans. Therefore, the study concludes that this treatment is effective for veterans of either gender who experience PTSD. The methods of the study appear to be sound, but a larger sample size of female veterans would be helpful in supporting its results.