



# Annotated Bibliographies

An annotated bibliography is a set of resources, each summarised, that address a research topic or issue.

Bibliography = a list of books  
Annotated = with notes added

Each resource has its own entry in the bibliography. Each entry includes the bibliographic information, a summary of the main information or ideas, and a short analysis or evaluation.

## The purpose of an annotated bibliography

Generally, an annotated bibliography will be set as an assessment task for one or more of the following reasons:

- to engage you in a critical review of the literature on a topic
- to develop your analytical skills through a deeper engagement with individual sources
- to identify the main arguments and research conducted on a topic before using this information in a larger assessment task, for example, an essay, report or research project

**Important Note:** When preparing an annotated bibliography, it is important to read and follow the assignment instructions carefully, and to seek clarification from your lecturer if needed.

The following are some suggested steps to work through when preparing your annotated bibliography.

## 1. Find resources and record the bibliographic details

To find relevant and academic resources:

- look through your course reading lists
- look at the bibliographies of your course texts for other relevant resources
- search for books and journal articles in the library catalogue and databases

Briefly examine and review the resources, then choose the information sources that closely align with your topic, and/or offer a variety of perspectives. To record the bibliographic details, follow the conventions of the prescribed referencing style for your course.

## 2. Write the summary

To write an effective summary for an annotation, you need to read for the main ideas and write them clearly and concisely in your own words. To avoid including unnecessary details, ask yourself the following questions to help you stay focussed on the *main ideas* in the resource:

- What was the aim of the research or the main argument in the reading?
- What evidence was used in support?
- What was the scope of the research?
- What were the major findings and/or conclusions?



When writing your summary, follow the same order in which the article is organised. You can use signposting words to help your reader visualise the structure of the text. For example, “the article first discusses X ..., then outlines y...” If there are headings, these can be used as a guide to the main sections.

### 3. Write the evaluation

The evaluation is your critical response to the resource and comes after the summary. To write an effective evaluation ask yourself the following questions:

- What does it contribute to my understanding of the topic?
- How does it 'fit in' with other resources on the topic?
- What points does it address that are common to other resources on the topic?
- What points or perspectives does it provide that are unique?
- How strong is the evidence/argument presented?
- What does it add to the existing field of knowledge?
- Would I recommend it to someone interested in the topic? Why/why not?

Consider your answers to the above questions when writing your evaluation. Also check your assignment instructions carefully to identify what must be included in the evaluation.

This could include:

- relevance
- appropriateness (e.g., theory, method, framework...)
- strengths and limitations
- reliability
- a comparison with publications on the same topic

### 4. Prepare the full collection

To finalise your draft of the annotated bibliography:

- **Consider where you could make linkages** between the entries by highlighting similarities and differences between resources.
- **Arrange your collection in alphabetical order** according to the authors' family names, unless your lecturer has specified otherwise.
- **Check the accuracy of your entries.** For example, you may have thought that the first article you read contained some unusual or original ideas, but after reading other sources you realise the ideas are similar to those of other text. This means you will need to revise your comments.