

## How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

**WHAT:** An annotated bibliography is one in which you include a short summary or abstract of sources you are thinking of using for a paper. In this way, it differs from a works cited list, which gives only a bibliographic citation for the source. Annotated bibliographies can also exist as separate, complete documents which provide overviews of existing literature for specific subjects.

**WHO:** Annotated bibliographies can be used in any field of study. They provide readers with background information about your sources, so they are useful for researchers who need concise, accurate information about sources. They can also be a tool for you in your own research; writing an annotated bibliography can help you critically evaluate books, journal articles and other sources.

**WHERE:** An annotated bibliography is usually a separate document, and it can be placed in an appendix at the end of your paper. However, this bibliography does not replace the works cited list, references, or other bibliography at the end of your paper.

**WHEN:** You should begin your annotated bibliography when you begin your research. This enables you to decide from the start which sources are appropriate for your study. As you continue your research, you can revise and update your annotated bibliography to include sources which you have cited in your text as well as sources which have provided you with background information on your subject.

**HOW:** There are up to five components in an annotated bibliography. As always, if there is a discrepancy between this format for an annotated bibliography and your instructor's directions for one, you should adhere to the instructor's directions, or discuss the matter with him/her to clarify any confusion.

**Bibliographic line:** This line should be a citation for the work that is consistent with whatever style you are using in your text (i.e. APA, MLA, CBE, Chicago, etc.).

**Structure line:** This line should describe the structure of the source, from beginning to end. Think of the source as a tool; what internal tools does it contain? Include graphs, tables, chapter notes, appendices, glossary, index, etc.

**Descriptive line:** This line should describe the genre, main idea, and purpose of the source.

**Content line:** This line should include the subject and substance of the source. Important arguments or controversial statements made by the author can be included here. For some subjects, it is acceptable to include your opinion of the arguments or statements, giving a more subjective view of the source.

**Assessment line:** This line should include particular areas of the source that were useful for your research; you can include specific sections, chapters, graphs, tables, etc.

## EXAMPLES

American Association of University Presses. (in press). Guidelines for bias-free usage.  
New York: Author. <sup>1</sup>

A guide for scholarly writers and the people who edit their work; extensive sections on gender bias and on race, ethnicity, citizenship and nationality, and religion; smaller but substantive sections on sexual orientation, age, and disabilities; fine examples from university press manuscripts.

Gall, A., Breitmayer, B. (1993). Mothers' perceptions of sibling adjustment and family life in childhood chronic illness. Journal of Pediatric Nursing, 8(5), 318-323. <sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this study was to examine variations in sibling behavioral adjustment in relation to mothers' perceptions of the illness experience and family life. Differences were found between mothers who rated healthy siblings either poorly or very well adjusted. The findings of this study suggest that when a mother shows evidence of burden, she feels a lack of control. Nurses should assess for adjustment problems and the effect the illness has on healthy siblings.

---

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association, *Publication Manual*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1996), 325.

<sup>2</sup> Gillette, Suzanne, "Annotated Bibliography Example in Nursing" (Tacoma: University of Washington, 1998).