

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography may be an assignment on its own or a stage to help you gather research, evaluate topics, and narrow your focus for an assigned task. It differs from a basic bibliography in that it adds summary information and, typically, provides a critical evaluation of each source cited.

Faigley, Graves, and Graves explain that annotated bibliographies are very useful in the early stages of research: "By taking the time to write a brief summary and evaluation of each source you locate on your topic, you create building materials that you can use when it comes time to narrow your focus and start outlining and drafting" (p. 259).

The Annotated Bibliography Should Include:

- An alphabetical list of research sources.
- A summary and critical assessment of each citation that comments on the source's content and relevance to the writer's research.

Step One: Determining Relevant Sources

- Have a research topic or question in mind when searching for your sources.
- Critically assess information for relevance when determining what to include.
- Choose sources that sufficiently support the point you are intending to make.
- Choose sources that possess quality arguments that contribute to your research.

Step Two: Summarizing your Selected Works

- Identify the argument that the selected source offers; this can usually be found in the thesis, topic sentences, and conclusion.
- Identify the methods that the author used to gather the evidence for his or her argument.
- Note the central conclusions that the author provides.

Step Three: Commenting on the Relevance of the Sources

- Describe how each source is relevant to your research.
- Consider the following questions:
 - Does it use a theoretical framework or research methodology that pertains to what you are aiming to do?
 - Does it present new information, theories, or conclusions about the subject matter you are discussing?
 - Does it assess evidence that you are using in your research?
 - How does the source material pertain to your work?

Please note that the following example is formatted in Chicago-Turabian author-date style. The documentation style may change according to course requirements.

Example:

Cornelius, Carol. 1999. "Corn as a cultural center of the Haudenosaunee way of life." In *Corn in a culture-based curriculum*. 91-118. New York: State University of New York Press.

In this chapter, Cornelius argues that by examining one aspect of a culture's artefacts, in this case corn, we can better understand all facets of the cultural context in a holistic way. She examines the prevalence of corn in the Ceremonial cycle, the oral tradition, and the daily life of the Haudenosaunee. The chapter concludes by diagramming the interconnectedness of the culture that can be determined by applying this approach to analyzing a particular cultural artefact. The method presented by Cornelius is a useful model for discussing cultures in a holistic way and preventing artefacts from being viewed out of context. When examining the culture of the Inuit in Canada's Arctic region, Cornelius's approach can be adopted to understand the cultural complexity underpinning the significance of whale.

References

Faigley, L., Graves, R., & Graves, H. (2008). *The Brief Penguin Handbook (Canadian ed.)*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.

Knott, D. (2004). Writing an annotated bibliography [Resource]. Retrieved from <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/annotated-bibliography/>