

Writing An Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a prewriting strategy that allows you to compile your research and reflect on its use. By writing citations for each source, it prepares you for your final works cited page, but also helps you keep track of sources when you need to find them again. The annotations allow you to summarize each source, so you can return to it quickly and reference what was there, as well as reflect on how you might use that source in your paper.

While there is no real official way to write an annotated bibliography—some professors may require one paragraph annotations, while some two paragraph annotations, and others don't specify at all—but there are some general basic rules. Below is one way to write an annotated bibliography that works in most venues, but always defer to your instructor's instructions.

A typical length for annotations is between 150 and 200 words. While some professors may want you to only summarize (this is more often when an annotated bibliography is a standalone project to explore research), others may want you to only discuss how you will use the sources in upcoming papers. A good balance to aim for is a ratio of 75% summary and 25% description of use.

1. Write your citation in the format requested.

This should be the citation that would come on your "Works Cited"/"References"/"Bibliography" page. You should use a hanging indentation for this (that is, if there is more than one line, the first line is not indented and subsequent lines are).

2. Begin with a topic sentence.

Your annotation should be fully indented throughout (this should match your hanging indent. Your topic sentence should function like the thesis of your annotation, the place where you tell the reader (or yourself), in the briefest terms possible, what the source is about. You should begin with the author's name, and introduce that author's field of expertise or study. A good format for this sentence is **Author (w/ description) + Verb + Concise Summary**.

Ex. "Meredith Martin, Associate Professor of English at Princeton and leading scholar in historical prosody, contends that in the period between 1860 and 1930 nationalistic impulses in Britain led to the growing discourse surrounding poetic meter and the standardization of scansion."

3. Write a brief summary.

Follow your topic sentence with a brief summary of the sources most important or useful points. It is best to avoid using quotations except for important terms or phrases. Instead, condense the argument into a concise statement in your own words. This should comprise 75% of your annotation.

4. Write a plan for use.

You should follow your summary with a few sentences describing how you position your argument in relation to the source as well as what you can draw from the source and how you plan on including it in your paper. This should comprise about 25 % of your annotation.

Example:

Martin, Meredith. *The Rise and Fall of Meter*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2012. Print.

Meredith Martin, Associate Professor of English at Princeton and leading scholar in historical prosody, contends that in the period between 1860 and 1930 nationalistic impulses in Britain led to the growing discourse surrounding poetic meter and the standardization of scansion. Martin explains that the standardization, expansion, and teaching of meter in public schools both aided empire, through linguistic colonization, but also emphasized a sense of “Englishness,” creating the myth that “English meter” was inherent in “English bodies.” Martin’s book will be extremely useful, as she meticulously compiles research and readings from wide arrays of pedagogical books, nationalistic treatises, and poetic manifestos. She produces a clear and detailed history of English meter and the changes in the concept of meter throughout the period and beyond which I can use to juxtapose the history of meter alongside the history of telephonic media technologies. In doing so, I can show that the two histories line up with surprising and provocative parallels suggesting the phenomena are related.

Citation

Summary

Plan for Use