

# Annotated Bibliography

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An annotated bibliography lists sources that will be used for a particular project. Although some instructors may only require summative annotations, most want students to go a step further to include evaluative or critical content. The point of this assignment is to explain the content of your sources, assess their quality and accuracy, and determine their usefulness for your purpose. Pay careful attention to your instructor's requirements, as this assignment can vary in its specific approach. An annotation includes a complete citation, a summary and a critical evaluation. Use commas in the following circumstances:

## A good annotated bibliography...

- Encourages you to think critically about the author(s) and content of the works you are using, their place within a field of study, and their relation to your own research and ideas.
- Proves you have read and understood your sources.
- Establishes your work as a valid source and you as a competent researcher.
- Situates your study and topic in a continuing professional conversation.
- Provides a way for others to decide whether a source will be helpful to their research if they read it.

## Creating an Annotated Bibliography

1. **Locate books, articles or documents** that MAY contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual sources in order to choose the best ones that will provide a variety of perspectives and appropriate information for your topic.
2. **Cite each source** using the appropriate style, such as MLA or APA, according to your instructor, course and field. Follow the guidelines of that style carefully and make sure to include all required information. Keep careful records for yourself to be able to access the article in the future.
3. **Write a concise summary** of the main ideas of each source. No quotations from the original source should be used. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be four sentences to one paragraph in length.
4. **Write an evaluation** of the authority or background of the author, assess any bias, and determine the intended audience. Compare and contrast the information provided in this source with any others you are using. Make a critical evaluation of the source and

its worth based on this information and add it to your annotation. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be two sentences to one paragraph in length.

5. **Explain the relevance of the work**, how it illuminates your topic, and how it will be used in your project. Follow the professor's instructions as to length. This section can be two sentences to one paragraph in length.
6. The summary and commentary may either be combined into one paragraph or placed in separate paragraphs, depending on length requirements or your instructor's guidelines.
7. The sources are usually organized alphabetically, but if a large number of sources are involved, can be organized by the subsections of the intended project. Write in third person.

### Sample Annotation in MLA Style

Brandt, Deborah. *Literacy in American Lives*. Cambridge UP, 2001.

Brandt collected and analyzed over eighty life histories for this study of literacy practices in America between 1895 and 1985. Areas of focus include the impact of regional economic restructuring on literacy learning, the rising standards of literacy in the information age, and the disparate effects that these rising standards have had on different segments of society. Brandt also investigates how historically marginalized groups, including African-Americans, have nurtured literacy within their communities. For my project, I drew on Brandt's concept of literacy sponsorship as well as her discussion of literacy practices in African-American communities. Although somewhat dated, *Literacy in American Lives* continues to provide a useful theoretical framework for understanding the role that literacy practices play in American life.