

# Annotated Bibliographies

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to construct an annotated bibliography. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. Purpose of Annotated Bibliographies

Many courses may require you to write an **annotated bibliography**, or bibliographic information about your sources and a short description of each, as preparation for writing a paper.

These bibliographies are often no more than a page or two in length, but they are important because they force you to dive deeper into the source material.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Annotated Bibliography**

A document containing bibliographic information for an essay's sources, as well as a brief description of each source's content and relevance.

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## 2. Structure and Style

When you write an annotated bibliography for a course, consider that the professionalism of the product is a direct reflection of the quality of the paper that will result.

The following steps can help you be conscious of the structure and style of your annotated bibliography.



### STEP BY STEP

1. Begin by listing complete bibliographic information (author, year, source name, publisher, etc.) just as you would on the "References" page at the end of a paper.
2. Provide a sentence or two describing the contents of the source.
3. Summarize the various relevant topic areas that the source discusses.
4. Avoid vague phrasing and empty sentences. Weed out any generic sentences such as, "This source is very useful because it has tons of really good information."
5. Use present tense and future tense verbs to facilitate the immediacy of the information and the actual

future use of sources.

6. Discuss the exact way that you will use the source (e.g., for background information, for data, for graphics, or as a bibliographic tool).
7. Carefully judge the value of the source by considering, for example, its level of detail, bias, or the timeliness of its data.
8. Note if the source's text or bibliography will lead you to other sources.
9. Comment on anything that you find especially noteworthy about a source: Is it controversial? Definitive? Political? New?
10. Format the annotated bibliography so that each description is clearly associated with the proper source.

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## 3. Reference Formatting

The bibliographic information you will include at the beginning of each entry in the annotated bibliography should be formatted according to APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines. This information allows your reader to follow up on the sources you cited and do additional reading about the topic if desired.

The format of these citations will be the same as those you include on the "Works Cited" page at the end of your essay. Just like the citations on that page, you will want your annotated bibliography entries to be double-spaced and appear in alphabetical order by the author's last name. If you get the formatting of these citations right on your annotated bibliography, you will save time later when creating your "Works Cited" page.

The specific format of entries in the list of references varies slightly for different source types, but the entries generally include the following information:

- The name(s) of the author(s) or institution that wrote the source
- The year of publication and, where applicable, the exact date of publication
- The full title of the source
- For books, the city of publication
- For articles and essays, the name of the periodical or book where they appear
- For periodical articles, the volume, issue, and page numbers
- For sources on the web, the URL where the source is located

Below is a sample reference list with each source labeled by type (you will not need to label your source types; this is shown here as a formatting example). Remember that in your annotated bibliography, you will include a paragraph below each source summarizing its argument and explaining its relevance to your thesis.

### **Book**

Agatson, A. (2003). *The South Beach diet* New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.

### **Journal Article with Multiple Authors**

Ebbeling, C. B., Leidig, M. M., Feldman, H. A., Lovesky, M. M., & Ludwig, D. S. (2007). Effects of a low-glycemic load vs. low-fat diet in obese young adults: A randomized trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 297(19), 2092-2102.

### Web Source

Harvard School of Public Health. (2018). Diet review: Ketogenic diet for weight loss. *The Nutrition Source*. Retrieved from [www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/ketogenic-diet/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/ketogenic-diet/)



### HINT

In APA style, book and article titles are formatted in sentence case, not title case. Sentence case means that only the first word is capitalized, along with any proper nouns.



### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that the **purpose of annotated bibliographies** is to organize your sources and communicate their relevance to your research essay. You also learned that there are steps you can take to ensure the **structure and style** of your annotated bibliography appropriately convey the required information. The **formatting of your references** will follow the same APA guidelines as the "Works Cited" page you will include with your essay.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Annotated Bibliographies" and "Formatting a Research Paper" tutorials.



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