

Annotated Bibliography (APA)

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial investigates how writers create and use annotated bibliographies according to guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA). It outlines a process that begins with the steps writers should take to compile sources, and continues through the creation of an annotated bibliography. An example of an annotated bibliography is included.

This tutorial describes how to create an annotated bibliography in APA format in four parts:

1. Annotated Bibliographies
2. Compiling Sources: First Steps
3. Creating an Annotated Bibliography
4. Annotated Bibliography: Example

1. Annotated Bibliographies

A **bibliography** is a list of sources that provides data related to each source including the author's name, the title, publication information, and page numbers referenced. An **annotated bibliography** is also a list of sources that provides related data, but it also contains brief notes about each source.



TERMS TO KNOW

Bibliography

A list of sources that includes data related to the sources

Annotated Bibliography

A list of sources that includes data related to the sources and brief notes about each source

Annotated bibliographies enable writers to organize key information about sources. They make the drafting and revising processes easier, because data can be easily accessed. Writers can refer to their annotated bibliographies while drafting to find the information they need to create in-text or parenthetical citations. By means of a bibliography, writers let readers know what they found during the research process and where they found it. Annotated bibliographies help writers remember why, and in what way, sources are relevant to their argument, and how to use those sources in their essays.

2. Compiling Sources: First Steps

When responding to a source, there are several steps that writers should take to create (and eventually use) an annotated bibliography.



STEP BY STEP

Step One: Take notes that summarize the thesis and main ideas of the source, and respond with your thoughts and impressions about it (or its argument).

Step Two: Ask yourself whether you agree or disagree with the source's claims, and if you see problems with the source that must be addressed (or explored) in your essay. Does something about the source excite you? If so, should you address it in your essay?

Step Three: Note the sources to which your source refers. Often, you can use them too.

Step Four: When you have completed the preceding steps (including answering the questions), record the bibliographic data. This is important, because sources sometimes get lost or must be returned to libraries, etc. If you have your notes and the bibliographic data, you probably have everything you need to use the source effectively.

Bibliographic data includes the following:

- the author's (or authors') first and last name(s)
- the title of the source
- publication information: required publication information includes the date of publication and the name of the publisher, as well as the umbrella source (e.g., the literary journal that published the article you've cited or, for online sources, the URL)
- the date you accessed the source, and the page numbers corresponding to quotations or ideas you plan to use.

3. Creating an Annotated Bibliography

Annotated bibliographies require writers to provide certain information for each source. Bibliographic data must be formatted according to the required style (e.g., the Modern Language Association — MLA; or the American Psychological Association — APA). The example in the next section was formatted according to the APA Style Guide..

Bibliographic data is followed by a brief paragraph about the source. There are no requirements for what these notes should include, or how extensive they should be. Writers must decide what works best for each entry in the bibliography. A sentence or two that restates and summarizes (in the writer's own words) the thesis and main ideas of the source, and one or two sentences that indicate how the source could be used to support the essay, is usually sufficient.



Based on their current needs or preferences, some writers include longer notes, as well as key quotations and paraphrased passages (to be used in the essay) in annotated bibliographies.

When each annotated entry is complete, it should be inserted in the bibliography in alphabetical order, according to the style guidelines that are being used.

4. Annotated Bibliography: Example

The following example includes three sources and the annotations that were used before writing an essay. The sources are listed alphabetically, according to the author's last names.

Sample Annotated Bibliography in APA Format

Church, S. (2012) On Lyric Essays and Dancing in Sequined Pants. *Fourth Genre*, Vol. 14, (2) 173-179.

Using the metaphor of the title, Church argues that many aphoristic essays use the style to distract readers from the fact that they have nothing to say. He acknowledges that some things are best communicated through juxtaposition, but argues for nonlinear essay writing with more careful intent. I think I'll use this for a couple quotes, especially the one about John D'Gata, who practically created the genre of lyric essay, and maybe to back up my exploration of the difference between native and non-native essayists. It's only tangentially related to my topic, but the thesis is in line with mine, although it talks about a different subject.

Koestenbaum, W. (2001) *Humiliation*. New York, NY: Picador.

This aphoristic text (book? fiction? essay?) uses short sections of narrative and exposition, as well as juxtaposition and meaningful gaps to explore humiliation. His argument (if there is one) is that there's no way to encapsulate this topic with words, so he tries to create an experience for his readers, one that will tell us more than he could tell us directly. I will use this a primary source for my argument about the difference in perspective between native and non-native writers, since Koestenbaum uses this technique, but doesn't have to (here I'll use his other text). Quotations and paraphrases will probably be needed, but it depends on what I present for the other side.

Twomey, T. (2007) More Than One Way to Tell a Story: Rethinking the Place of Genre in Native American Autobiography and the Personal Essay. *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Vol. 19 (2) 22-51.

The experience and worldview of many Native American writers is one that goes against the linear, cause-and-effect ideology of the dominant culture. This is why so many of them compose texts that use juxtaposition and her term, "meaning-filled gaps," to convey feelings and information that don't necessarily correlate to the scientific method, and similar tools. I'll use this as the primary support for my analysis of, and comparison between, native and non-native writers. Even though Twomey is more interested in the native perspective (and defining it in contrast to the western worldview) I'd like to give equal time to both, and let the readers decide. Her "meaning-filled gaps" can be applied to both sides.

Note the bibliographic information that corresponds to the first annotation. It includes the writer's name and first initial, followed by the publication date. The APA style guidelines prioritize date over most other information. Next comes the title of the essay, "On Lyric Essays and Dancing in Sequined Pants," followed by the name of the literary journal in which it was published (in italics): *Fourth Genre*, Vol. 14, the second issue, and the pages it references. Below that is the paragraph that comprises the annotation of the source. It includes basic information about the article and a short explanation of why the writer thinks it will be useful.

The bibliographic information for the second source is similar. It includes the author's last name, first initial,

and the date of publication. However, since this source is a book, it only lists the title, *Humiliation*, and the publishing information. Read the writer's annotation. Note that it includes a short summary of the source and a brief discussion of how the writer thinks it may be useful. Also note the reference to the other texts he or she intends to use.

The bibliographic presentation for the last source is the same as the first source. It lists the author's last name, followed by the publication date and the title of the article, "More Than One Way to Tell a Story, Rethinking the Place of Genre in Native American Autobiography and the Personal Essay." It includes the journal in which it was published, *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Vol. 19, the second issue, and the pages on which it appears. The annotation includes a short summary of the article, consisting of its thesis and how the writer plans to use it to support his or her analysis.

Annotated bibliographies don't have to be long or complicated to be useful for writers during the drafting process.



SUMMARY

This tutorial considered annotated bibliographies: lists of sources that include bibliographic data and brief notes about each source. Annotated bibliographies organize key information about sources, and make the drafting and revising processes easier. The process of developing an annotated bibliography, from compiling sources to creating the bibliography, was described. The components of a sample annotated bibliography were examined to illustrate the usefulness of bibliographies to writers.

Source: Adapted from Sophia Instructor Gavin McCall



TERMS TO KNOW

Annotated Bibliography

A list of sources that includes their bibliographic data as well as brief, relevant notes about each one.

Bibliography

A list of sources, including their bibliographic data.