



Writing an annotated bibliography

Introduction

An annotated bibliography is different from a standard bibliography because a summary of source content is provided in addition to a reference. The summary part of an annotated bibliography can vary in length from a few sentences to several paragraphs (always check your assignment guidelines). This resource provides a very general overview of writing annotated bibliographies.

Note: This resource focuses upon writing a single summary paragraph of around 150- 200 words (should you need to write a shorter / longer summary the principles outlined in this resource are still applicable - you would just need to be briefer / more detailed in your discussion of the highlighted issues).

What types of source can be included?

As with any assignment, potentially a wide range of sources (journal articles / textbooks / chapters of edited books / official reports / etc.) could be included within an annotated bibliography. However, most commonly you will be asked to include journal articles.

Justifying your source selection

Your lecturer may ask you to include a paragraph(s) before the annotated bibliography justifying why you selected specific sources. If this is the case, you might consider selection parameters such as topic area relevance, age of material, geographical location of the study or method of data collection.

Formatting each annotated bibliography entry

Each entry in an annotated bibliography typically contains four key features:

Full reference	Write this out in full in accordance with your departmental guidelines
Source	Write down the source type (e.g. journal / textbook / government report / etc.
Content	Write down the format of the source (e.g. research report / literature review)
Summary	A short concise account of what the source is about

Each entry should be listed alphabetically based on first author surname.

Writing the summary

There are a number of principles to follow when writing annotated bibliography summaries:

- **Use your own words** - Avoid excessive use of quotations. Try to paraphrase and summarise content to demonstrate your understanding.
- **Be selective** – You will obviously not be able to discuss everything in your summary. The following are areas you would normally address:
 - What the source is about
 - Rationale – why the study was undertaken
 - Sample size and composition
 - How data was collected and analysed
 - Main findings / overall conclusions
- **Demonstrate evaluation and critical thinking** –Do not just describe what the author has reported rather question and challenge content. For instance: highlight strengths / limitations / bias (such as geographical / sample size / author political or theoretical affiliation / reliability / validity)
- **Length** – Will vary - check your assignment brief.

Example of an annotated bibliography entry (summary of approx. 150 words)

Ferguson, T. (2009) 'The 'write' skills and more: A thesis writing group for doctoral students', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 33 (2), pp.285-297.

Source: Journal article

Content: Research report

Summary: Ferguson discussed the formation and benefits of a doctoral Thesis Writing Group (TWG). These peer review groups were established because feedback from PhD students indicated a need for additional small group /more informal assistance in relation to writing development. Twenty-five doctoral students attended five TWG sessions. Eighty percent of the attendees then completed evaluation forms and indicated on a five-point Likert scale their perception of the group. TWG attendees reported improved writing, opportunity for peer interaction along with increased motivation and confidence. Generalisability of findings is limited due to the small sample size and inclusion of only doctoral students. It is also worth noting that the author provided very limited details regarding the 1) design of evaluation form; and 2) analysis of findings. These initial findings suggest that peer-to-peer groups significantly benefit students although given the limitations additional work would be needed to confirm this assertion.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

