

Finding Reliable Research Sources for Annotations

This is an open resource, so try to find research and support for your annotations that is accessible online and outside of your university's paywall. This might be public or digital public libraries, museums, authoritative online magazines or newspapers, or online encyclopedias.

If you are working with academic sources in your university library or library databases, be aware that not all readers will have access. Include a stable URL to a JSTOR article, the page you cited on Google Books (or HathiTrust, or Internet Archive), and so on. The source should be open to find and view, but do not be overly concerned if the *entire* text is not available for public consumption.

The important thing is that the source is reliable for the purpose of the project. Part of determining what a "reliable source" online is dependent on its citability. Discuss your sources with your instructor and your library representatives. Be sure to use attributive phrases so that readers know what you're working with and can find more information if necessary.

When in doubt, prefer these sources:

- Journal articles published in open-access online journals
- Online articles published by clearly respected leaders in the discipline
- Materials from major libraries and online exhibits by libraries or other scholarly organizations like the British Library, Smithsonian Museums, the Lily Library (etc)
- Popular-scholarly materials from known and respected publication outlets like *Time Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The Economist*, *The Atlantic* (etc)
- Published books from reliable sources available on Google Books (etc)
- Stable URLs for print journal articles that you have read and incorporate; stable URLs to Google Books, HathiTrust, or Internet Archive
- Materials that can be cited completely and certainly

Avoid the following kinds of sources:

- Blog posts, **unless** they or their authors are cited as authorities by other reliable sources (Why? These sites may not be there into the near future; they have not necessarily been through a peer review or editorial process; they may be easy to read, but they are probably not the best source you can find!)
- Material on faculty websites, like lecture notes and essays (Why? These sites may not be there into the near future; have not necessarily been through a peer review or editorial process; why not see if this author has published in a journal or written a book, or had a blog post included in a more stable forum?)
- Websites that contain anonymously-written essays (often, these are student "essay mills"), or listicles of any sort.

When in doubt, ask yourself: is this *really* the best source I can find? Really? Go and talk to your librarian or your professor, or look at some sample annotations.