

# Annotated Bibliography

## Tips for Success

An annotated bibliography is a collection of summaries and evaluations of relevant academic sources/literature relating to a particular topic. It can help you to identify credible sources for your research topic. It also helps you to organise and evaluate the ideas in your sources. When you write an annotated bibliography, you will be able to develop the ability to:

- Read critically;
- Summarise key ideas; and
- Make notes on your reading.

### Reading critically for your Annotated Bibliography

- **Skim read** the abstract, the introduction and the conclusion of the text to decide if it is necessary to read the whole text in detail. Consider whether your source is reliable and relevant to your topic;
- Note the **reference details**;
- **Take notes** of the important points for your summary;
- **Evaluate** ideas as you read, making notes of your own ideas; and
- **Write your summary and evaluation** of the text using your notes and critical comments.

### How to write an Annotated Bibliography

For each source that you annotate, include:

1. A **reference** to the source material (e.g., journal article, book chapter, video etc.) in your discipline's referencing style (e.g., APA, Chicago etc.)
2. A **summary** of key ideas from each source, including:
  - The main topic or theme of the source;
  - The key arguments made by the author(s); and
  - The research methods used (if relevant).

To complete your summary, use the following questions as a guide:

- What issues are addressed in the source?
- What is the aim of the research?
- What is the author(s) main finding(s) or conclusion(s)?
- What methods were used to collect and analyse the data?

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3. Your **evaluation** of each source. Consider the **strengths and limitations** of the source, using the following questions as a guide:

- Who are the authors? Are they credible? Are they experts in the field?
- Is the research commissioned by a reliable organisation?
- What is the scope of the research? What has been included and omitted?
- When was the research conducted and published? Is it current?
- How can it be used in this assignment and in research in other disciplines (if relevant)?
- Are the facts presented in a fair and balanced manner?

### Language use in an annotation

The language used in an annotation can be different to other forms of writing as you should refer to the sources in the discussion. In this example from UNSW, the **bold** phrases can be used to improve the links between the sentences as well as the language of your annotation. Take note of verb tenses when writing an annotated bibliography.

Trevor, C, Lansford, B. and Black, J., (2004). Employee Turnover and Job Performance: Monitoring the Influences of Salary Growth and Promotion, Journal of Armchair Psychology, 113(1), 56-64.

**In this article** Trevor et al. review the influences of pay and job opportunities in respect to job performance, turnover rates and employee motivation. **The authors use data gained** through organisational surveys of blue-chip companies in Vancouver, Canada to try to identify the main causes of employee turnover and whether it is linked to salary growth. **Their research focuses** on assessing a range of pay structures such as pay for performance and organisational reward schemes. **The article is useful to my research topic**, as Trevor et al. suggest that there are numerous reasons for employee turnover and variances in employee motivation and performance. **The main limitation of the article is that** the survey sample was restricted to mid-level management, **thus the authors** indicate that further, more extensive, research needs to be undertaken to develop a more in-depth understanding of employee turnover and job performance. **This article will not form the basis of my research;** however, **it will be useful supplementary information for my research** on pay structures

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### Example Annotation

**Annotated Bibliography = Reference + Annotation (summary + evaluation)**

The following is an example annotation after research on the topic "Poverty in the USA" adapted from the American Psychological Association Committee on Socioeconomic Status. You would have annotations like this for each source in your annotated bibliography. Generally annotations are short (150-200) words long, so your summary and evaluation need to be concise.

Cancian, M., Haveman, R., Meyer, D. R., & Wolfe, B. (2000). Before and After Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): The Economic Well-being of Women Leaving Welfare (Special Report No. 77). Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty. <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/sr/pdfs/sr77.pdf>

**Reference:**  
Full end-text reference for the source.

Using data from before and after the implementation of TANF (*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families*), the study compares the well-being of those who left welfare under early Wisconsin reforms and those who left under the later more stringent TANF program. Earnings were lower in the second cohort, consistent with the hypothesis that the new welfare regime pushes people with fewer employment skills into the labor market where they accept lower-paying jobs, joining the ranks of the working poor. This study provides evidence that new antipoverty policies are not necessarily more effective than older ones and would be used in the final section of the essay evaluating the impacts of recent antipoverty policies. Although the data is useful, the evidence is limited to only one state, Wisconsin, and may not be true of other States in the US.

**Summary:**  
The main findings and conclusions.

**Evaluation:**  
Relevance to the topic and limitations of research.

**Adapted from:** Monash University, LaTrobe University

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