

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

An annotated bibliography provides an overview of the content of sources related to your topic. It generally includes a critical evaluation of the material.

The length of entries (critical annotations) may vary a great deal - from a couple of lines to a number of paragraphs. It is normally written in full sentences. However, you may encounter some annotated bibliographies that use brief and incomplete sentences when the word limit and conciseness are particularly crucial. As with other bibliographies, an annotated bibliography is presented in **alphabetical order** according to the authors' surname.

In writing an annotated bibliography for assessment, refer to your assignment notes and any marking or assessment criteria given by the lecturer. This will clarify expectations regarding the depth of information required. You also will be expected to read widely and select good quality material, so ensure that the material is relevant, accurate and up-to-date.

Content of a critical annotation

A reader of annotated bibliographies wants to gain from the experience of someone who has already read and used the source. Therefore, an annotated bibliography should have two sections:

- the reference details (bibliographic information)
- your description and comments on the material (annotation)

At a minimum, readers need a summary of the contents. They may also want a critical evaluation of the book or article. When compiling an annotated bibliography as an assessment task, refer to the guidelines provided by the lecturer. They may want to know:

- the strengths and weaknesses of the source
- its place in—and relationship to—the wider field of research
- how it adds to the research in the field
- if the information is sound, logical and well researched
- if it is readable and informative
- if it is broad and balanced
- the intended audience
- the aims and philosophical or theoretical bases of the source

Your annotated bibliography presents a quick and effective insight into some of the texts you've used. If it is to be read more widely, the reader is likely to be researching a similar topic to yours. It provides an idea of whether the texts you used would be useful for their research. Therefore, your annotated bibliography should offer a general description and broad evaluation of the text—book, chapter or journal article—and perhaps include an indication of how the resource contributes to the topic of your essay/thesis as well.

Language and focus

It is important not to fall into discussing or summarising the information in the text. You are required to outline, in a much broader way, the type, the level and/or the quality of the information. Think of yourself as a reviewer of the material. Tell the reader about the text, what it covers and in what way. Avoid discussion of the specific details of subject matter.

The language of an annotated bibliography should be formal and objective, following the style of academic writing. The focus is on the source ('the article outlines...', 'the book covers...') and it is written in paragraphs with complete sentences and is generally in the present tense.

Sample of a critical annotation

Organise your annotated bibliography in alphabetical order according to the family name of the authors. Each annotated summary will be around 200 words, although this may vary so you should check with your lecturer. Look at the following sample with the elements outlined on either side:

You don't need to repeat information that is clear from the title. Any information apparent in the title of the text can be omitted from the annotation.

Be concise – you're writing a brief summary.

Write complete sentences, using standard English.

Mention only significant and relevant details.

This discusses only one text so there is no need to cross reference or use in-text citations.

Raghuram, S., Garud, R., Wiesenfeld, B., & Gupta, V. (2001). Factors contributing to virtual work adjustment, *Journal of Management*. 27, 383-405.

This article explores the factors that facilitate or hinder employees' adjustment from a conventional office-based environment to a virtual work environment, situated either distantly or at home. The article suggests that structural factors (such as work independence and clear evaluation criteria) and relational factors (such as feeling of trust in colleagues and management, and a sense of connectedness to the company) are key facilitators of successful adjustment. Researchers also explore issues such as age, gender and experience of virtual work as moderators of the key indicators.

The report is highly readable and there is a logical progression in explaining the rationale of the study design. The results are supported statistically and simple graphic representations distil the important findings. Although the research sample was generally a representative cross-section across genders, job categories and management hierarchy, it may be biased in the fact that only telecommunication industries were selected. Furthermore, all results correlate to measures of the employees' adjustment to virtual work; however, these completely rest upon 'self-perceived adjustment'. Whether or not this is a reliable and true measure of their adjustment has not been addressed.

The finding that organisational connectedness is a powerful factor in the adjustment to virtual work for men has informed the present research on women in IT. The article is useful to my research topic as Raghuram et al. find that although a correlation between feeling connected to the company and successful virtual work adjustment still remains, it is much less significant for females. This potentially supports the notion that women are well suited to being the pioneers of the virtual work environment.

Start with full bibliographic details of the text.

Provide a brief summary of the content, including the aims.

Outline the main findings and conclusions. [Identify the research methods if applicable.]

Give a critical evaluation of the article. [Comment on readability.]

Include a critical evaluation of the methodology and the content.

Identifies possible limitations of the text.

Indicate how this material may be relevant and useful for your research.