

Writing an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a list of cited sources about a particular topic, in which each citation is followed by a brief paragraph that discusses aspects of the source. An annotated bibliography is useful for documenting your research in a specific area, exploring varying viewpoints, and summarizing main points from different sources. Format requirements of an annotated bibliography vary greatly from one documentation style to another; please refer to the style manual for specific format requirements (ex: MLA, APA, CBE, Chicago, etc.).

There are two parts to every entry in an annotated bibliography: the **citation** and the **annotation**.

The Citation:

The citation includes the bibliographic information of the source. The documentation style required for this information depends upon your particular academic field and will usually be assigned by your professor (some common styles include MLA, APA, CBE, and Chicago). Follow the instructions for the assignment, and the guidelines in the appropriate documentation handbook. Citations are organized alphabetically.

Sample Journal Citation in MLA format:

Gilbert, Pam. "From Voice to Text: Reconsidering Writing and Reading in the English Classroom." English Education 23.4 (1991): 195-211.

The Annotation:

The annotation is a brief paragraph following the citation.

Purpose of the Annotation:

The annotation of a source can serve several different purposes. Your professor may require your annotations to do some of the following:

- describe the content of the source
- describe the usefulness of the source
- describe the intended audience
- evaluate the credibility of the source
- discuss the writer's background
- describe your reaction

The length of an annotation depends upon the assignment. Shorter annotations will most likely cover only main points and themes; longer annotations may require a more in-depth description, discussion, or evaluation of the source. Consult the specific requirements for your assignment.

See the opposite side of this handout for a sample annotated bibliography page . . .

Sample Annotated Bibliography Page

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- This handout follows MLA conventions as explained in the 6th edition of Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, with the exception of the single-spacing dictated by our space limitations. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers indicates that an annotated bibliography should be double-spaced throughout.
 - The format for the annotated bibliography depends upon its intended use. If you are composing it for a class assignment, the instructor will tell you what format to follow.
 - The focus of the following annotated bibliography is the use of reading and literature in the composition classroom.
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Gilbert, Pam. "From Voice to Text: Reconsidering Writing and Reading in the English Classroom." English Education 23.4 (1991): 195-211. Gilbert provides some insight into the concept of "voice" in textual interpretation, and points to a need to move away from the search for voice in reading. Her reasons stem from a growing danger of "social and critical illiteracy," which might be better dealt with through a move toward different textual understandings. Gilbert suggests that theories of language as a social practice can be more useful in teaching. Her ideas seem to disagree with those who believe in a dominant voice in writing, but she presents an interesting perspective.

Greene, Stuart. "Mining Texts in Reading to Write." Journal of Advanced Composition 12.1 (1992): 151-67. This article works from the assumption that reading and writing inform each other, particularly in the matter of rhetorical constructs. Greene introduces the concept of "mining texts" for rhetorical situations when reading with a sense of authorship. Considerations for what can be mined include language, structure, and context, all of which can be useful depending upon the writer's goals. The article provides some practical methods that compliment Doug Brent's ideas about reading as invention.

Murray, Donald M. Read to Write: A Writing Process Reader. Forth Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1987. Murray's book deals more specifically with the ways writers read other writers, particularly the ways in which writers read themselves. Read to Write provides a view of drafting and revising, focusing on the way a piece of writing evolves as an author takes the time to read and criticize his or her own work. Moreover, the book spotlights some excellent examples of professional writing and displays each writer's own comments on their own creations, in effect allowing the student reader to learn (by reading) the art of rereading and rewriting as exemplified by famous authors.

Newell, George E. "The Effects of Between-Draft Responses on Students' Writing and Reasoning About Literature." Written Communication 11.3 (1994): 311-47. This study reflects the advantage of teacher responses on student papers. When reflected upon as "dialogue" questions to the student, these comments can lead to further interpretation and deeper understanding of a text. Newell found that responses which prompted students to work from their initial drafts brought about more final papers than teacher responses that led them away from their initial drafts with "directive" remarks.