

How to write an annotated bibliography

First, you need at least **4 scholarly** sources. These sources can be books, chapters from books, scholarly articles, court cases, etc. First, you need to give a correct bibliographical citation of the sources—in MLA style. Then you need to begin with a 3-4 sentence descriptive summary of the source (explain what the thesis of the source is, which primary texts the source writes about, and what cultural concepts the source discusses). Finally, you need to describe how this source might be useful to other researchers (imagine someone else writing about your selected literary work or your selected cultural concept). This final section of the annotation might pose key questions, tie into specific sections of your research interests, or discuss ways that the source offers background, further research, etc. But, it mainly needs to be specific—make a specific claim about exactly how this source might be useful to a broad audience of researchers.

You may find that you have spent time with a source that is not at all useful to you; if so, you may still include that source on your bibliography but describe why it is not useful—just remember that the more of those sources you include, the less helpful your annotated bibliography will be to your essay.

AUDIENCE: Awareness of audience is paramount when writing an annotated bibliography. Your audience is people who are doing their own research. They don't care what your paper topic is or what your assignment is. They care about whether a source might be relevant to their project. So, do not make reference to yourself at all (don't say "my thesis," or "my idea," or what "I am going to write about"). *The focus of the language in an annotation should be on the source.* So, you should write in 3rd Person. The subjects of your sentences should be the source, some aspect of the source, or the writer of the source.

Below is what the formatting will look like:

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How to Write a Bad Annotation and Receive a Low Grade

The following annotation has a number of problems that should be avoided:

Davies, Cecil. "The Burning Bird: Golding's Poems and the Novels." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* Spring80: p97-21p.

Comment [jgw1]: This part of the citation does not follow MLA Style and needs to be revised.

This story is about William Golding and his three works *The Eyes' Delight*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *The Interiors*. The content that is useful for the paper I am writing about is first of all the parts that actually talk about the *Lord of the Flies*. Since the article talks about three different writings there is only a small section about my book. There is one really good part of the article is where William Golding says that he picked a group of civilized private schooled men because the fall of that height makes the novel a true tragedy. This research is useful to other researchers by having a direct quote from the writer of the novel himself which is the best person you can get a quote from.

Comment [jgw2]: The source is an article (an essay), not a story.

Comment [jgw3]: This language reveals a lack of awareness of the audience for an annotated bibliography.

Comment [jgw4]: Your book? Your audience does not know which work you are writing about, and it does not know anything about your assignment, so do not refer to your paper or your primary source when writing an annotated bibliography.

Comment [jgw5]: Using second person "you" is a bad idea in almost all forms of academic writing.

This sentence uses redundant language, and the claim of this sentence is vague and unhelpful.