

How to Prepare an Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, and documents that you have consulted during your research. Each document citation is followed by an annotation: a brief (approx. 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph. The annotation is not simply a summary of the document, rather it should do some or all of the following:

- Describe the content/thesis of the document
- Describe the usefulness of the document to your research
- Discuss any limitations that the item may have (age, grade level, bias, etc)
- Describe what audience the item is intended for
- Evaluate the reliability of the item
- Evaluate the authority or background of the author
- Discuss any conclusions the author may have made
- Describe your reaction to the item

The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to allow you to review the available literature on a particular subject, illustrate the quality of research you have done, and provide examples of the types of sources available on a particular topic. It is important to complete an annotated bibliography as part of your research to make sure that there will be sufficient material to base your research on.

YOU DO NOT NECESSARILY NEED TO READ THE ENTIRE DOCUMENT IN ORDER TO CREATE AN ANNOTATION.

Make use of tables of contents, indexes, and scanning to gain an understanding of the document. In many cases, there may only be a few pages in a 300 page book that are relevant to your topic, in that case it would certainly be a waste of time to read the entire book!

Example annotation:

Waite, Linda J., Frances Kobrin Goldscheider, and Christina Witsberger. "Nonfamily Living and the Erosion of Traditional Family Orientations Among Young Adults." American Sociological Review 51 (1986): 541-554.

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.