

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES



WHY DO WE WRITE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES?

An annotated bibliography is an alphabetised list of summarised and/or critiqued reference materials such as books, articles, and websites. It aims to:

- Provide a brief overview of the literature on a specific topic
- Document each source's key points, relevance, and quality
- Allow you to keep track of valuable resources



At university, you might be asked to write an annotated bibliography to demonstrate your research skills, summarising skills, evaluation skills, or understanding of a topic. Therefore, depending on the assignment requirements and purpose, your annotated bibliography might be descriptive, evaluative, or reflective.



Note: An annotated bibliography is *not* the same as a literature review. While they involve a similar process of research and evaluation, they differ in how they present research findings. An annotated bibliography provides a separate summary of each item as a list, whereas a literature review synthesises them into a single, structured piece of writing.

[SEE THE GUIDE ON LITERATURE REVIEWS](#)

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

An annotated bibliography begins with the source's bibliographic details followed by a brief paragraph (generally under 200 words) that summarises or critiques the key content. As each item is very short, it is important to focus only on **the most important features** of the source.

The specific elements that you need to discuss will vary depending on your assignment criteria and the type of the source you are reviewing. For example, a summary of an argumentative article may focus on the author's claim, perspective, and evidence, whereas a summary of a research report may focus on methods, results, and conclusions. As always, check the requirements of your assignment and rubric.

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

EXAMPLES:

The full bibliographic details in your topic's preferred reference style	Highmore, B. (2001). <i>Everyday life and cultural theory</i> . Routledge.
A brief overview of the research aims or argument	This article examines ..., Smith's (2020) purpose is ..., The author argues that ...
The research methods (<i>if relevant</i>)	The authors surveyed 30 participants from ... A semi-structured interview was used to ...
The scope and limitations (what is included and what is left out?)	The study focuses on ..., The main limitation of the article is ...
The key findings, key points, or conclusions	The author provides a strong theoretical framework for ..., The author compares ..., The theories are supported by ...
Relevance or usefulness to your topic or research (<i>if relevant</i>)	This article informs the methodology of my research ... While this article provides a useful definition of good practice, due to its limitations, it does not ...



Each item in an annotated bibliography is presented in a list sorted alphabetically by author's last name. As references are provided in full throughout the document, it is not necessary to include a reference list at the end (unless otherwise instructed).



EXAMPLES OF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The following is an example of a **brief descriptive** annotated bibliography entry:

Bibliographic details	Crotty, M. (2007). <i>The foundations of social research</i> . Allen & Unwin.
Aims	This book aims to provide social researchers with an overview of the major epistemological stances and theoretical perspectives of the discipline. It covers
Key points	positivism, constructionism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, feminism, and postmodernism, explaining the philosophical origins of each and linking them to applicable research methodologies. It provides an important foundation for
Relevance	developing a theoretical understanding of the field and will inform the methodological framework for my own research.

The following is an example of an **evaluative** annotated bibliography entry:

Bibliographic details	Guo, P. J., Kim, J., & Rubin, R. (2014, March). How video production affects student engagement: An empirical study of MOOC videos. In <i>Proceedings of the first ACM conference on Learning@ scale conference</i> (pp. 41-50). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2556325.2566239
Research aims	This article presents a large-scale empirical study of student engagement with online educational videos. The authors evaluate four video design styles including recorded lectures, 'talking head' videos, digital tablet drawings, and PowerPoint presentations to determine their effect on how long students watch a video and whether they attempt post-video assessment. The authors use a
Methods	mixed methods approach analysing quantitative data from four edX courses and qualitative interviews with six edX staff. The study is the largest of its kind, using data from 6.9 million video watching sessions across the edX MOOC platform. The findings indicate that short, talking head and tablet style videos are most engaging and the authors recommend that instructors plan their content delivery differently for video than for the classroom. The article provides a
Scope	thorough overview of the advantages and limitations of each style. However, in the six-years since its publication, there has been a rapid evolution of online educational video use and styles, especially in the wake of Covid-19. Therefore, its relevance to contemporary educational video producers will depend on how much they've updated to newer video styles.
Findings	
Relevance and evaluation	

LANGUAGE

As an annotated bibliography entry is so short, it is important to use **clear**, **concise**, and **precise** language. It should be formal in style, but if you are referring to the relevance of the source to your own research, it is appropriate to use the first-person voice.

[SEE THE GUIDE ON WRITING STYLE](#)