**What is an annotated bibliography?**

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As an academic writer, you'll probably be asked, at some point, to create an annotated bibliography for one of your research projects. So it kind of helps to know what an annotated bibliography is. Let's take it piece by piece. A bibliography is a list of sources with information about where and when they were published, and an annotation is a note that explains, summarizes, or analyzes something else, such as a source. Put them together, and you get an annotated bibliography, a list of sources you plan to use for your project, with complete publication information in a short paragraph summarizing and evaluating each source.

So what's the point? Gathering and presenting all your different sources shows you've done your research on your topic and understand the larger debate and key players. Annotating makes you think carefully about your sources, helping you understand them and showing you how each one can help you answer your research question and support a position you might take in your essay. Your annotated bibliography is organized in alphabetical order, by author, so you can easily check back on your sources.

There are different formatting styles. This one is MLA style. There should be an annotation for each source, written in paragraph form. Each annotation features a summary and an evaluation.

First, you recap the author's main idea and key points. Then, you analyze the strengths of the source and its usefulness to your research question and argument. In other words, in the summary, you say what you learned from a source, and in the evaluation, you say what role it will play in your project. Keep in mind an annotated bibliography can be both a freestanding assignment and a step in a larger research project. And now that you know what an annotated bibliography is, starting your own should be no problem.

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