



Academic Writing Guide: How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

What is an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a brief summary of some or all of your research sources and a brief evaluation of how relevant or helpful this resource was/will be for your paper. Depending on the nature of your assignment, the annotated bibliography may be one stage of the research/writing process, or it may be all you have to do. Your annotations should reflect the nature of your research project and the guidelines of your assignment.

How to Write an Annotated Bibliography

1. List your sources in alphabetical order.
2. Use the appropriate Citations Style Guide to format your sources (check with your instructor if you are unsure of which style guide to use).
3. Below each resource, write the author's key ideas.
4. Under the author's key ideas, identify one or two reasons why you think this source will be helpful to you and your research project.

Sample MLA Annotated Bibliography Entry

Pierce, Jeremy. "Destiny in the Wizarding World." *Introducing Philosophy Through Pop Culture*, edited by William Irwin and David Kyle Johnson, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 89-98.

Despite author J.K. Rowling's assertion that she does not believe in destiny, prophecy plays a large role in the Harry Potter series and Potter does seem to be destined for something, namely the destruction of the 'Dark Lord.' Pierce's essay addresses the question of what it means to claim that Harry Potter has a destiny. The essay explores the role of destiny and prophecy, their various meanings, and the role they play in the Harry Potter stories.

In any discussion about destiny, the philosophical questions of freedom, determinism, and compatibilism inevitably arise. Pierce places these concepts within the context of the Potter books and explores them in the interplay of various characters' interpretations. As such, it will be useful in the discussion about the tension between prophecy, destiny, and Harry's right to determine his own future which pervades this series of novels.

Sample APA Annotated Bibliography Entry

Weinberg, R.A. (2007). *The Biology of Cancer*. New York: Garland Science.

The book synthesizes current understandings of how cancer occurs and the best pathways for treatment in the future. It begins with a condensed recap of basic biological constructs which lays the foundation for the more complex concepts discussed in the later chapters. Each chapter contains a “Synopsis and Prospects” section at the end which summarizes the discussion thus far, highlights issues that continue to be a source of debate, and considers where research may be directed in the future.

One of Weinberg’s chief goals is to enable students to move beyond the textbook and be able to directly access and comprehend primary research literature. It is a good source for explaining the specialized vocabulary that is common in cancer research literature as well as enabling readers to gain an understanding of the common acronyms that tend to appear frequently in current medical research literature. The additional CD-ROM and web-based resources connected to the book make this a valuable resource for students seeking to develop a deeper understanding of the various cancers that afflict humanity and the ground-breaking research that has led to new approaches in the treatment of cancers during the past century.

Sample CMS (Chicago) Annotated Bibliography Entry

Parker, John, and Richard Rathbone. *African History: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Most people in the West are familiar with one account of Africa’s identity—a continent devastated by its colonial past. However, they tend to be unaware of the resilient culture and rich history that has survived over the millennia. Parker and Rathbone draw on examples from both Africa and the African diaspora to examine how Africans and historians have perceived and presented African history.

Parker and Rathbone present a view of African history that moves beyond the stereotypes of the continent being out of step with the rest of the world. It provides both an interesting insight into African history as well as the craft of being a good historian. The book paves the way for a critical re-evolution of Africa’s history and place in the contemporary world.

For additional help, please make an appointment with a Writing & Learning Centre Humanities specialist at: <https://alexander.mywconline.com/>