

WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

An annotated bibliography is a list of selected literature with critical comments related to a research topic. It generally includes books, scholarly articles, and other published material. The content of the selected literature items is summarised in critical annotations, which usually include an evaluation of their usefulness for the research purpose.

An annotated bibliography is presented in alphabetical order according to the authors' surnames. The bibliography is a selection of good quality relevant material that is accurate, up-to-date, and generally peer reviewed. The length of each entry (annotation) may vary from a couple of sentences to a number of paragraphs. Check your assignment guide for clarification.

Content of a critical annotation

An annotation has two main sections:

- the reference details (bibliographic information)
- a description and comments on the material (annotation).

A critical annotation contains a summary of the content of each item in the bibliography. This should focus on the value of the material for the research topic in relation to:

- its aims and philosophical or theoretical bases
- how it adds to the research in the field
- its place in—and relationship to—the wider field of research
- the intended audience
- the strengths and weaknesses of the source for your research purpose
- if it is original, important and of a high standard
- if the findings are sound, logical and well researched.

An annotated bibliography presents a quick and effective insight into some of the texts you have selected. Therefore, it should present a description and evaluation of each item, in addition to an indication of how that item contributes to your research topic.

Focus and language

The focus of annotated bibliography is on the source ('the article outlines...', 'the book covers...') and it is written in paragraphs with complete sentences, generally in the present tense. The language should be formal and objective, in an academic writing style.

In an annotation, you should summarise and comment on the content of the book or article, critically assess its relevance to your research, and identify its contribution to the general field of inquiry.

* See next page for a sample critical annotation.

Sample of a critical annotation

Look at this example of a critical annotation with some of the elements outlined. Each annotation (summary) in an annotated bibliography is usually around 200 words, although this may vary so you should check the assignment guide. Present your annotated bibliography in alphabetical order according to the family name of the authors.

Features	Example	Elements
Starts with full bibliographic details of the text.*	Raghuram, S, Garud, R, Wiesenfeld, B & Gupta, V 2001, 'Factors contributing to virtual work adjustment', <i>Journal of Management</i> , vol. 27, pp. 383-405.	Use the correct citation style.*
Write a brief summary of the text. Be concise.	The article explores the factors that facilitate or hinder employees' adjustment when moving from a conventional office-based environment to a virtual work environment, whether situated distantly or at home. The article suggests that structural factors (such as work independence and clear evaluation criteria) and relational factors (such as feeling of trust in colleagues and management, and a sense of connectedness to the company) are key facilitators of successful adjustment. The researchers also explore aspects such as age, gender and experience of virtual work, as moderators of the key indicators.	Provides a brief summary of the content, including the aims.
Write in complete sentences, in standard English.		Outlines the most relevant findings and/or conclusions.
Any information apparent in the title of the text can be omitted from the annotation.		[Identifies research methods if applicable.]
Mention only significant and relevant details.	The article provides a useful rationale explaining the basis of the study design. The results are supported statistically and graphic representations distil the important findings. While the research sample is large, however, and a representative cross-section of employees across genders, job categories and management hierarchy is used, it may be biased in the fact that the selection is limited to employees in the telecommunication industries. Furthermore, while all results correlate to measures of the employees' adjustment to virtual work, the findings rest largely upon 'self-perceived adjustment'. Whether or not this is a reliable and accurate measure of successful adjustment is not addressed.	Gives a critical evaluation of the article. May include an evaluation of the methodology, findings and conclusions.
The annotation discusses only one text so there is no need to cross reference or use in-text citations.	The finding that organisational connectedness is a powerful factor in the adjustment to virtual work for men has informed the present research on women in IT. The article is useful to my research topic as Raghuram et al. find that although a correlation between feeling connected to the company and successful virtual work adjustment still remains, it is much less significant for females. This potentially supports the notion that women are well suited to being the pioneers of the virtual work environment.	May identify possible limitations of the article or study. Indicates how this material may be relevant and useful for the writer's research.

* Use the referencing style specified for your course. Author–date (Harvard) citation is used here.