WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

An annotated bibliography is a list of sources (which may include books, journal articles, or websites) followed by a description of each source. Entries in annotated bibliographies are usually between 50 and 150 words long. The number of sources and the type of sources required by an assignment varies. Check with your instructor.

TYPES OF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

DESCRIPTIVE: A summary of the source’s content. Outline the hypothesis, main findings, and conclusion.

ANALYTICAL/CRITICAL: Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument. Evaluate the work in terms of its usefulness and quality.

COMBINATION: This is the most common type of annotated bibliography. Write one or two sentences describing the content of the source and then another few sentences analysing it.

STEPS IN WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Read sources (books, journal articles, or websites) that pertain to your topic.
2. Choose sources that have a variety of perspectives on your topic.
3. Be sure to cite your sources in the required format (refer to the library’s APA guides).
4. The text of the annotation:

   DESCRIBITIVE ANNOTATION
   ✓ Describe the source’s contents and special merits.
   ✓ Indicate the scope, treatment, authority, and point of view.

   ANALYTICAL/CRITICAL ANNOTATION
   ✓ Give the authority of the author and the point of view from which he/she writes.
   Indicate the nature of the book or article’s content, its scope, and quality.
   ✓ Point out the source’s strengths and weaknesses.
   ✓ You may compare it to other books or articles on the same subject matter.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

✓ Write from the point of view of an objective third person.
✓ Be succinct; avoid unnecessary words and long sentences.
✓ Be specific and use direct language – avoid general or vague statements like “the book is interesting” or “the article is good” – explain why it is interesting or good.
✓ Unless the author is well known, state his or her qualifications and particular point of view.

APA AND ANNOTATION

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.) does not discuss the formal use of annotation in a bibliography/reference list. Always follow assignment guidelines from your instructor.
SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Body Modification and Health Concerns: A Sample Annotated Bibliography

In this study, Durkin, a Clinical Nurse Specialist, examined the relationship between body modification practices, including tattoos and body piercings, and various health concerns. Public health concerns include safety and disease transmission. Permanent tattooing and jewelry placement may cause complications in various treatments and procedures by causing burns or injury. Durkin provides recommendations for patient safety including patient education, infection control practices, and safety procedures.


Researchers Kaatz, Elsner, and Bauer provide a thorough overview of health complications surrounding both tattoos and body piercings. As tattoos and piercings gain in popularity and gain mainstream acceptance, general practitioners are seeing a rise in related complications, including allergic reactions, lesions, infections (both bacterial and viral), malignant tumours, burns, bleeding, and more. While the authors do provide limited data for the many concerns outlined, there is a lack of specific recommendations for patients or healthcare providers.

- Follow the same formatting rules for writing a paper in APA Style.
- This sample page includes a running head, page number, centered title, and two entries.
- Each entry includes a complete APA Style citation and an annotation.
- Entries are in alphabetical order.
- Your assignment may require different content or formatting, so check with your instructor.