
Annotated Bibliography: APA Format

Some assignments require students to create *annotated bibliographies*. These are simply entries in reference list format with descriptive or evaluative comments attached. The *Publication Manual* (7th ed.) has now established guidelines for annotated bibliographies although the exact nature of the assignment will be set by the instructor.

1. Annotation Content

Typically, the annotations indicate

1. the authority and qualifications of the author;
2. the subject, scope, and theme of the work;
3. biases, omissions, or limitations;
4. the intended audience;
5. special features (graphs, charts, photographs, illustrations, statistics, etc.).

2. Annotation Format

1. Format the reference portion as you would any item in a list of references: The first line of the citation starts at the left margin and subsequent lines are indented (“hanging indentation”). The annotation begins on a new line and is indented by one stop from the left margin.
2. Indentations should be ½ in.
3. Entries use double spacing with no extra lines between entries.
4. Use alphabetical ordering (by author); some annotated bibliographies have separate sections for primary/secondary material or books/articles.
5. If the annotation consists of more than one paragraph, indent the first line of each successive paragraph an additional tab stop.

Sample entry:

Fowler, H. R., Aaron, J. E., & McArthur, M. (2001). *The Little, Brown handbook*. (3rd Can. ed.).

Addison Wesley Longman.

Well-organized grammar and composition workbook. Includes many useful exercises and examples and good sections on APA, MLA, and CSE formats. Inexpensive and widely available undergraduate text that also makes a useful general reference work.

Note: The second and third words of this book title (Little, Brown) are proper nouns: They are capitalized because they are names and not because they are elements of a book title.

Sample entry 2 (long annotation):

University of Chicago Press. (2010). *The Chicago manual of style* (16th ed.).

This standard reference for authors, editors, printers, and academics provides an exhaustive body of information about every detail of manuscripts and published materials. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* cites it as a major source for its chapter on editorial style. It has extensive sections on punctuation, formatting, and documentation totaling over 600 pages. Other sections deal with manuscript development, legal considerations, and book production. The work is the oldest style guide still in use; the first edition was published in 1906 and it has been under continuous development since.

The size and complexity of the work are challenging. The guide often sets out alternatives rather than strict rules. Although the discussions are comprehensive and reasonable, some students find this variability confusing. The sheer bulk (1026 pp.) can also discourage; however, the chapter layout and indexing are excellent. The expense and size of the volume make it more of an institutional than a personal reference.

Note: This long annotation (161 words) consists of two paragraphs, which have additional indentations. Again, the margins have been narrowed artificially to make the levels of indentation clearer.