

How to Write an Annotated Bibliographic Entry

Annotated bibliographies take a little practice, but they're ultimately meant to help you if you're pulling together some research for a report. They're brief, **usually about 150** words, and contain a descriptive paragraph and an evaluative paragraph. Here are the steps to follow when writing your annotation:

Step 1: Write your citation. This simply has the author, title, where and when published, and the URL. It looks something like this:

APA: Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. Henry Holt and Company.

MLA: Ehrenreich, B. *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. Henry Holt and Company, 2001.

Step 2: Write the annotation. The annotation itself has two parts: a descriptive paragraph (a summary of what's in the source) and an evaluative paragraph (a brief rhetorical analysis of who the author is, whether the information is relevant and credible, whether you see any bias, and if you're going to be using this for a larger project, whether it will be help for you.

Descriptive paragraph:

- **Talk about the author. (1 sentence)**
Is this a professor? Maybe this is a professional in the field? Or is this person a hobbyist? Tell the audience about the author in the first part of the annotation.
- **Explain what the article is about. (1-3 sentences)**
Tell the audience what is in the article. This is the most difficult part of the annotation because it requires you to be very succinct. Don't rewrite the article; just write the main idea of the article and the most important supporting points.

Evaluative paragraph:

- **Use the CRAAP test to evaluate how credible the source is. (1-2 sentences).**
This silly sounding test stands for these five areas. Use them to figure out whether the source is credible or not and why. You don't have to address all of them – just use them to help you figure out how good your source is and whether it's useful for your purpose.
 - **Currency:** the timelines of the information. When was it published or posted? Has the information been revised or updated? Is the information current or is it out of date?
 - **Relevance:** the importance of the information for your needs. This applies more to doing more formal research rather than an annotated bibliography.
 - **Authority:** the source of the information. Who is the author/publisher/source? Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given? What *are* those credentials? Is there contact information such as publisher or email address? Does the url tell you anything (.com is commercial, .edu is educational, .gov is government, .org is nonprofit organization).
 - **Accuracy:** the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content. Where does the information come from? Is it supported by evidence? Has the information been reviewed or refereed? Can you verify any of the information by looking at another source or from your own knowledge? Does the

language or tone seem biased and free of emotion? Are there spelling, grammar, or typographical errors that indicate sloppiness?

- **Purpose:** the reason the information exists. Is it meant to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade? Do the authors make their intentions clear? Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda? Does the point of view seem objective and impartial? Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
- **Explain how this article is relevant to your topic. (1-2 sentences)** Again, this is more for your technical research report, so you don't need it for the Summary assignment. What about this article makes it relevant to your topic? Why did you select it? What pertinent bit of information makes this article stand out among the others?

Here's an example of an annotation done in APA:

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. Henry Holt and Company.

In this book of nonfiction based on the journalist's experiential research, Ehrenreich attempts to ascertain whether it is currently possible for an individual to live on a minimum-wage in America. Taking jobs as a waitress, a maid in a cleaning service, and a Walmart sales employee, the author summarizes and reflects on her work, her relationships with fellow workers, and her financial struggles in each situation.

An experienced journalist, Ehrenreich is aware of the limitations of her experiment and the ethical implications of her experiential research tactics and reflects on these issues in the text. The author is forthcoming about her methods and supplements her experiences with scholarly research on her places of employment, the economy, and the rising cost of living in America. Ehrenreich's project is timely, descriptive, and well-researched.