

# Annotated bibliographies



Charles Sturt University

Academic Skills  
Division of Student Success

Put simply, *annotate* means to ‘make a note’, and *biblio* refers to ‘book’. Students nowadays must consult more widely than just books and the sources included in annotated bibliographies reflect this. The citation will be presented with an accompanying annotation that is briefly descriptive and evaluative.

Annotations aim to provide the reader with information about the text and its scope, and relevance, accuracy and quality of each source. Sometimes an annotated bibliography comprises an entire assessment, and others it forms the basis of the research towards a particular area of research or question.

Carefully check the requirements of your task, but generally you will:

- provide a brief and clear statement about what the work is about.
- describe scope and what it covers, the intended audience.
- evaluate authority through the currency and the expertise and understanding of the author(s).
- explain relevance to the topic under research and how it will contribute to your understanding on the topic.

## Reading Critically

Reading a text critically will involve asking questions of a text, evaluating its scope, purpose, quality, and relevance. Your notes could encompass a list or be in a visual format such as a concept map or spider diagram.

Write notes out together with your reference information, do not rely on open tabs in your browser to store the bibliographic information. You could write notes on the text itself, if you have your own copy, or use a note-taking template such as the Cornell method.

- [Cornell note-making DOCX File](#)
- [Note-making while reading](#)

Critical Reading requires asking relevant questions of a text. For example:

What is the text about? What does it cover?

What expertise does the author(s) have?

What is its main argument and is this supported with evidence and examples?

Is the subject dealt with fully and accurately, or is it treated superficially? Is it comprehensive?

How useful is the source? For whom?

Has the author adopted a particular theoretical perspective? Do implicit assumptions underlie the work?

When was it written and what context?

What are the strengths/weaknesses of the source?

Is the source limited in any way: by time, place, sample size?

Is the argument contentious? If yes, how does the author justify her stance and refute alternatives?

How is the source biased?

How credible is this source? Is this article from a highly respected professional journal or is it posted on the web by a narrow interest group?

Consider your purpose in reviewing each of the sources, for example the topic and its relevance, the types of sources being reviewed and why, and what standards for each of these are you going to apply to evaluate the texts.

## Presentation

The citation goes first above the annotation. Citations are presented in APA (7th ed.) style, as this is the standard used across Charles Sturt. See the APA Referencing Summary or the ART on the [Referencing Page](#) for presenting different source types in APA.

As with a reference list, an annotated bibliography should be presented in alphabetical order by author's surname. Check carefully with the requirements in your Subject Outline, but the annotation is usually around 100–200 words. The annotation should be written in clear, concise, academic writing. As the annotation reviews one text at a time, it is not necessary to include in-text citations.

### Topic xx: Annotated Bibliography

Bloggs, J., & Jones, T. (2014). *Reflections on library usage*. University Press.

The opening sentence will give a concise introduction to the article as a whole. Then you will let the reader know the aims of the source. A description of the scope of the information or research of the website/ article/ book comes next. The details are presented here with appropriate language such as this article explores/ discusses, an [academic phrase bank](#) might be useful to you if you are unsure of this. Here you will describe the usefulness of this particular source to your topic, for example how well does this source help you discuss the topic being investigated? As well as describing how it is relevant to your assignment question you will describe any limitations of this source. You could then conclude with an overall evaluation of the annotated source. Additionally, a reflection on how you might use the text in your own research.

Karpicke, J. D. (2016, June). A powerful way to improve learning and memory: Practicing retrieval enhances long-term, meaningful learning. *Psychological Science Agenda*.

<https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2016/06/learning-memory>

Karpicke claims that learning by retrieving information, in a variety of different ways, is an under-utilised learning event. The author uses data about what are most commonly used learning and revision strategies, such as rereading, are among the least effective for memory and retention. Karpicke reviewed studies on retrieval and different methods for students to undertake this in quizzes and concept mapping, both as closed-book activities, and spaced over time to enhance memory. The article is relevant to my topic and could be used communicated to students the most effective methods of both learning material for their subjects and studying towards exams, so they can achieve good grades. The source is fairly current, although it would be beneficial to consult more recent material as well, to ensure up-to-date best practice is being communicated to students.

## Reach out for help

The Charles Sturt Academic Skills team is here to help you develop your learning skills.

Access further information about all of our available services and learning resources by visiting [csu.edu.au/academicskills](http://csu.edu.au/academicskills).