Annotated Bibliographies in MLA Style

**The 8th Edition of the MLA Style Guide does not address annotated bibs. The MLA Style Center does feature information about annotated bibs, however.**

[**What guidance should I give my students for preparing an annotated bibliography?**](https://style.mla.org/annotated-bibliographies/)

Students should style a source in an annotated bibliography just as they would in a list of works cited and then append an annotation to the end of the entry. Annotations describe or evaluate sources. As James Harner writes, “[G]ood annotations accurately and incisively—but not cryptically—distill the essence of works” and “focus the reader’s attention on major points” (28). Annotations should not rehash minor details, cite evidence, quote the author, or recount steps in an argument. Writing an effective annotation requires reading the work, understanding its aims, and clearly summarizing them. For this reason, annotations may aid students in conducting research.

If the instructor preference is to have students use complete sentences in the annotation, the students should add a line space after the entry and then begin the annotation with a paragraph indent:

Harbord, Janet. *The Evolution of Film: Rethinking Film Studies*. Polity, 2007.

This synthesis of classic film theory examines the state of film studies as of 2007. It draws on contemporary scholarship in philosophy, anthropology, and media studies.

The list should be titled Annotated Bibliography or Annotated List of Works Cited. Students may organize the bibliography alphabetically by author or title (as for a normal list of works cited), by the date of publication, or by subject.

Please tell students to alphabetize their annotated bibs!

**Work Cited**

Harner, James. *On Compiling an Annotated Bibliography*. Modern Language Association of America, 2000.