Creating an annotated bibliography is a useful and sometimes required step in the process of writing a research paper. After you focus your topic and develop a working thesis, the search for sources begins. Whenever you perform research, you should record bibliographic information as you gather your sources. To make your working bibliography into an annotated bibliography, you need to evaluate each source and create a brief annotation following the bibliographic entry for each. The completed annotated bibliography is a formal report of this recording and evaluation.

Process
Once you’ve focused your topic and developed a working thesis, find and collect books, journal articles, and other documents that pertain to your thesis. Be sure to record all the appropriate bibliographic information for each source (this is the “bibliography” part of the assignment).

In addition to recording the citations, you will need to evaluate the sources you find. This process could take some time because you’ll need to read and consider your sources. Remember, however, that some of your sources may only have sections that are relevant to your topic: a chapter in a book, for example, or a single essay in a collection. Because your annotated bibliography is for your specific research, you only need to focus on the material that is relevant to your thesis.

Your instructor will usually indicate the content requirements for the annotations. Almost always, annotations include a summary of the source and a description of its usefulness to your project. Your instructor may require you to include some or all of the following:

1. Brief summary of the source
2. Evaluation of the author’s credentials and/or the publication’s reputation
3. Discussion of the significance of the material in general
4. Discussion of the significance of the material in terms of your thesis

You may also want to mention the inclusion of data, graphs, reference lists, etc. Remember that the point of the annotation is to explain the usefulness of the source, so refer to the things in the source you think are most pertinent to your project.

Format
The format for an annotated bibliography depends on the documentation style required for your research paper, typically either the Modern Language Association (MLA) style or the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Check with your instructor for guidelines.

The following page has sample entries that include some, but not all, of the four items listed above. For more help, you might visit
http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm
http://www.unf.edu/~alderman/BLISS2/annotatedbibliography.html
For entries in MLA format:


This story serves as both a primary and secondary source because it is a translation of a folk tale, which can be analyzed as a primary source, and the translator, who holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and was a Fulbright Scholar in Chile, has included helpful footnotes about the origins of the tale and the cultural traditions associated with the tale.

For entries in APA format:


The author is a landscape architect and heads the professional post-graduate program at the University of Greenwich, London. He writes widely in the American and British design press and is also the author of *International Landscape Design*. This book analyzes 39 landscape projects recently built in Europe, Japan and the United States. Chapter Five covers ecological diversity projects, which feature collections of plants from ecosystems around the world. Most require specialized garden structures. For each project, Holden describes location, design, goals, and information about the architect, but the author does not include detailed description or critical analysis.