

**The UNB Writing Centre**

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## 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 APA has no guidelines on the formatting of such bibliographies; they have commented that their own practice in the *Publication Manual* "does not constitute a standard or guideline" and noted that "APA style omits general rules explained in widely available style books." They suggested that writers "consult another style manual" (APA Style Expert, email, October 9, 2002).

The approach the *Publication Manual* actually uses is significantly different from that specified in other style books. The best approach might be to rely partly on the standard for APA reference citations and partly upon the block quotation format described in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. This is the approach we have taken, and we are careful to point out the differences between this method and the actual practice of the *APA Publication Manual*.

### 1. Annotation Content

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 Style

The comments vary in length and style.

1. Length of annotations: 30-150 words
2. Syntax: either sentences or fragmentary notes omitting introductory words and phrases, articles, and unnecessary modifiers. Be consistent; use one style throughout.

### 3. Annotation Format

1. Hanging indents: These are required for all entries in the bibliography. The first line of the citation starts at the left margin and subsequent lines are indented. The annotation begins on a new line and is indented by TWO tab stops.
2. Tabs: indentations should be "five to seven spaces or ½ in." (p. 289), although its own annotated bibliography entries (pp. 368-374) use indents of four, then two spaces.
3. Line spacing: entries use double spacing with no extra lines between entries.
4. Arrangement: use alphabetical ordering (by author); some annotated bibliographies

have separate sections for primary/secondary material or books/articles.

Sample entry:

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

Toronto: 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. (1993). *The Chicago manual of style* (14th ed.). Chicago: Author.

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 devotes over 600 pages to punctuation, formatting, and documentation. Other sections deal with manuscript development, legal considerations, and book production. The work is the oldest standard style guide still in use.

The size and complexity of the work create some obstacles. Many sections of the guide set out alternatives rather than strict rules. Although the discussions are comprehensive and clear, some students find this variability confusing. The sheer bulk (921 pages) can also discourage; however, chapter layout and indexing are excellent.

Note: This long annotation (129 words) consists of two paragraphs, which have additional indentations. Again, the margins have been narrowed artificially to make the levels of indentation clearer.