



Academic Writing Centre ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of an A.B.:

- To provide your reader with background on the author
- To give historical context and relevance to the source material
- To demonstrate the depth/breadth of your own research
- To identify the target audience
- To determine the usefulness or applicability of the source
- To evaluate the author's credibility
- To explore directions for further research

Questions to consider when creating an A.B.:

- How much do I know about my topic?
- What is the specific aim of my research?
- Are there any key texts that I need to study?
- Have I selected the appropriate sources as per my instructor's requirements?
- Can I identify the writer's thesis?
- What about the author's credentials? Biases? Quality of research methodology? Reliability of sources? Degree of influence? Intended readership?

Annotated Bibliographies

1. Short Explanatory Note

An annotated bibliography (A.B.) may take one of two forms: 1) a short explanatory note or 2) a half-full page essay.

An annotated bibliography (short or long) is a list of sources - books, scholarly papers, magazine articles, web sites - providing an overview of the current state of research on a particular topic, in a citation style usually determined by the professor or as required in that discipline e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago.

Each entry in the **short A.B.** contains two elements:

- 1) A *citation* which includes all the necessary information about the document – name of author, date of publication, title of book/article, location and name of publisher
- 2) An *annotation* giving a succinct description and/or evaluation of the work.

There are 3 types of short A.B.:

Descriptive: concerned mainly with identifying the author's central argument, main findings, and conclusion i.e. a summary of the work in terms of its content

Critical: offers an analysis of the work, assessing its relative merits and then makes a pronouncement about its overall usefulness

Combination: begins with a brief description of the content followed by a few sentences of critical appraisal

Sample Short Explanatory A.B.

Bryant, J., & Anderson, D.R. (1983). *Children's understanding of television: Research on attention and comprehension*. New York: Academic Press.

Several essays, including one by the editors, discuss the effects of television on children. An essay by D. Anderson and Lorch, chapter one, defends the active participation of children in answer to those critics who say children are too passive. The essay by J. Anderson, chapter twelve, defends the technical skills required for watching television.

Sweet, C., & Blythe, H. (1983). Using media to teach English. *Instructional Innovator*, 28, 22-24.

Children still watch television, so teachers should respond to the electronic revolution. Teaching is another tool, but it will be an "effective tool" only if teachers develop a "television consciousness" and use the media as a supplement to other classroom methods.

Tripp, D., & Hodge, R. (1986). *Children and television: A semiotic approach*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

This book on children and television explores the social aspects primarily, and it features one chapter, "Television and Schooling", that discusses television as a "hidden curriculum" that teachers should ignore.

Sample entries taken from Lester, J. D. (1993). *Writing research papers*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Steps in Writing an A.B.:

1. Read books/articles critically, locating that information within the framework of your own research.
2. Select sources (usually 10-15) that offer multiple perspectives on your topic.
3. Choose a citation format (APA, MLA, Chicago) and use it consistently.
4. Provide complete bibliographic information for each entry.
5. Write the annotations keeping the following points in mind:
 - Objective 3rd person is the preferred point of view.
 - Succinct, direct language is always best.
 - Ambiguous, trite or general pronouncements should be avoided e.g. “This is a really interesting article” or “This book is definitely worth reading”.
 - It is necessary to differentiate scholarly and popular sources.
 - Date of publication may have a bearing on the validity of the data.
 - As a scholar, you need to be able to recognize points of convergence and divergence within a body of literature.

Annotated Bibliographies

1. Essay-Style A.B.

In some cases, you will be required to write a longer, essay-style annotated bibliography. While the format for the entry citation will be the same as it is for the short explanatory style A.B., you will need to engage in a more thorough and detailed analysis of the text. The full length A.B. includes the complete reference information at the top of the page, with the annotation below (either in separate paragraphs or as a block of text), and can be organized as follows:

- i) Introduction:** Identify author and topic, mention central claim behind the work, make reference to author’s perspective (e.g. Marxist, Feminist, Deconstructionist), and indicate type of source (book, article, web site)
- ii) Summary of Author’s Main Argument:** Highlight key arguments and include supporting evidence
- iii) Analysis:** Explain the significance of the author’s argument; evaluate the accuracy and validity of the work; give reasons why you agree/disagree with the author’s position
- iv) Conclusion:** Provide a final assessment of the work, weighing its strengths and weaknesses; give your overriding impression; make a judgement as to the value of the source and consider its possible impact on the field of study

Sample Essay-Style A.B.

Jones, C. (2007). Employee turnover rates: Monitoring trends in job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 15*, 125-133.

In this article Jones reviews the influences of pay and job opportunities in respect to job performance, turnover rates, and employee motivation. The author uses data gained through organizational surveys of blue-chip companies in Vancouver to try to identify the main causes of employee turnover and whether it is linked to salary growth. The research focuses on assessing a range of pay structures such as pay for performance and organizational reward schemes. The article is useful for general research purposes, as Jones suggests that there are numerous reasons for employee turnover and variances in employee motivation and performance. The main limitation of the article is that the survey sample was restricted to mid-level management; thus, the author indicates that further, more extensive research needs to be undertaken to develop a more in-depth understanding of employee turnover and job performance. This article, though not central to the issue of employee job satisfaction, does contain useful supplementary information on trends in corporate pay structures.

Sample entry adapted from Shannon Kennedy-Clark, Tracy –Lee Downey & Pam Mort (2006). The Learning Centre, University of New South Wales.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Academic Writing Centre
478 and 470 Sunset Avenue
Windsor, Ontario, Canada, N9B 3P4
Phone: 519-253-3000 Ext 3405
Fax 519-561-1410
Online: www.uwindsor.ca/awc