Maintain a working bibliography for books, periodicals, and other sources

Maintain a working bibliography that includes a record of any sources you use, keeping notes on all the information you'll need to cite the source in your bibliography.

For an overview of related key topics on avoiding plagiarism, visit the videos and quizzes in this tutorial.

Explore It

Managing the sources you consult and keeping clear records are important tasks in any research project. Creating and maintaining a working bibliography helps you track the sources you have, including some that you may not eventually use in the final research project. Keep good track of your sources and the points they make. A carefully assembled working bibliography will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism that can occur, for example, if you omit important citation information or misrepresent the claims of a source.

Some instructors may require you to submit an annotated version of your working bibliography, sometimes as part of a larger research assignment. The annotated bibliography includes brief summaries for each entry that help you quickly recall what a source says. More detailed or formal annotated bibliographies can include annotations that help you to see how each source relates to your main point and how it works in contrast to the other sources.

Annotated Bibliography Entry in MLA Style


Note that if this entry describing Brode’s book were included in an annotated bibliography following APA style, the entry would begin with the following:


And in a *Chicago*-style annotated bibliography, the entry would begin:


Learn It

Keep careful notes about the sources you locate, record all the necessary information to locate a source (should you need to consult it again later in your project), and properly cite it in your final paper. When you find a source that you think may be helpful, record the bibliographic information, including author, title, and publication information, and write down specific page numbers or URLs that you may need later. Begin using the documentation style required by your instructor to format your working bibliography, which will prevent confusion and possibly save you trouble later in tracking down missing elements for the bibliography in your final draft. Organize your working bibliography alphabetically, using the authors' last names. The following suggestions will help you prepare a useful working bibliography.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

• **Record bibliographic information.** For print sources, collect and record the library call number or other locator, along with the author, title, publication information, and page numbers (if your source is an article or part of a book). For electronic sources, record the same information, adding any publication information about a print version (if relevant), along with the URL or DOI (digital object identifier) number of any online articles.

• **Locate available research management tools.** For research you conduct online beginning with *Questia* or with your school's library site, check whether there are tools available such as *EndNote* or *RefWorks* or those in *Questia* that allow you to manage bibliography information. These tools offer helpful ways to organize lists of your sources for future use. And they collect publication information which you can export and reformat following the documentation style required for your assignment.

• **Search for publication details of online sources.** For sources that you locate online, including visuals and other media, note that recording the publication details can require some additional searching. You may need to widen your search, examining a site's homepage or “About Us” pages for the author or sponsor of the online source. Finding the needed details about the author and publication may require some extra digging on your part; don't give up the search too quickly and record what you can find.

• **Provide a summary of the source.** Your instructor may also require that each bibliography entry include annotations that summarize or make other comments about each source. An annotated bibliography includes entries that feature a brief summary, usually a short paragraph in length, listing the main points of the source. The summary will help you later on to recall what each source covers.

• **Evaluate the usefulness of the source for your project.** Annotated bibliography entries often include evaluative information as well, offering a comment on each source. These comments can help you recall how the source relates to the others you've uncovered for your project. If your instructor requires an annotated bibliography, follow the guidelines given for the kinds of annotations that are required.

(For more help creating a working bibliography, see the advice on taking notes in tutorial 2, *Conducting Research.* )
Use It

Skim the following sources available in Questia on the topic of prescription drug ads aimed at consumers and choose one to read more carefully. Then create an entry for a working bibliography for the source you chose. Write a paragraph that summarizes the source (see the annotated source on p. 1 of this document for an example). Add a sentence or two evaluating the source for potential relevance to a research project on this topic. Finally, consider what you saw in the other sources you skimmed and write a sentence or two highlighting the relationship between the source you chose and the other ones you skimmed.

