

Tracking, Analyzing and Using Sources

Since research is an ongoing process based on previous work, as a researcher, you are part of an ongoing conversation; you are responding to and building on ideas that have been presented by others. When you describe your research, you need to tie your ideas to what has already been done and present your own argument as a response to previous work.



Analyzing Sources

To understand previous work in your area of research, you need to identify **the patterns and themes** in the literature. Strategies that assist you in analyzing your sources effectively include writing summaries, creating annotated bibliographies, and using reverse outlines.

Summary: a shortened version of something that has been written, containing only the main points

To summarize:

- Understand the text and find the main point(s).
- Decide what to include/exclude: Differentiate between main points and evidence.
- Organize by idea and don't just use the author's organization to write your summary.

Avoid Play-by-Play: In her first section, the author introduced the economic viability criteria she would use to compare football teams. She then established precedent for her methods by listing articles that had used similar methods in the past. Next, she explained the limitations of the previous studies...

Try Post-Game Analysis: Using x and y variables in a linear regression analysis, the author demonstrated the economic security of the Green Bay Packers.

Annotated Bibliography: an organized list of sources, each of which is followed by a brief description and evaluation.

Writing an annotated bibliography can help you gain a valuable perspective on what is being said about your topic.

By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you'll start to see what the issues are, what people are arguing about, and you'll then be able to develop your own point of view.

Annotations usually ask you to:

- Summarize the content and focus of the book or article.
What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered?
- Evaluate its method, conclusions, or reliability.
Is the information reliable? Do the authors use appropriate methods, or overstate the implications of their findings?
- Describe the source's usefulness to your research.
How relevant is the information to your research project? How can you use this source in your research project? How can it help you shape your argument?
- Record your reactions to the source.
Do you agree/disagree with the ideas? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

Using Sources

Proper citations allow your reader to:

- Give appropriate credit for ideas and words
- Follow your research path and access your sources
- Evaluate your credibility as a writer and researcher
- Distinguish your ideas from those of others

Tracking Sources: Citation management software

Citation management software can help you keep track of your sources, as well as help you:

- build and organize your own database
- import citations from your favorite databases and websites
- format bibliographies and citations for papers
- annotate articles in your database
- share articles and annotations

Refworks: <https://proquest.libguides.com/refworks/writencite> & https://proquest.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=40832454