

Writing Article Reviews & Annotated Bibliographies

Writing Centre Learning Guide

Article reviews and annotated bibliographies have many similarities and both will be covered in this Learning Guide. Both are written to provide the reader with an overview of the selected literature and usually require a critique of the material. A novice in the area should be able to read your review or annotated bibliography and have a good understanding of what the reading is about and where it stands in relation to other literature in the field or subject area.

General background

Article reviews and annotated bibliographies can be useful for your own personal study, however they are also often set as assessment tasks in University courses. If so, you must always carefully read the assessment instructions as outlined by your lecturer/tutor in the course information book. The format and length of reviews and annotated bibliographies can vary greatly from school to school. Some lecturers/tutors provide a format for you to follow, others do not.

Reviews vary in length from about 250 words to 1000 or more words and could be of a whole book or a single article or chapter. Some reviews or annotated bibliographies will require you to make extensive comment on how they relate to other material written about the subject. Others will ask you to deal only with the material in the article under review.

This Learning Guide can only give general details to guide you in attempting this type of assessment. More precise information should be given in your assessment guidelines.

(1) Article reviews

The first step in writing an article review is to carefully read and note the article to be reviewed. Without a thorough understanding of the content of the article, it will be difficult to write an effective review.

If you have difficulty with academic reading or note-taking please refer to the Writing Centre Learning Guides [Effective Reading](#) and [Making Notes](#).

Article reviews will generally have a distinctive structure as outlined below:

- Introduction
- Body
 - Summary
 - Critique
- Conclusion

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Each section will have particular information in it. Read the assessment task very carefully to see if all of these sections are required and what exactly is expected in your particular review.

Introduction (about 10% of your word length)

- The introduction will have a sentence that introduces the title of the article or book, the year it was published and the name of the author (the bibliographic details).
- You will also need to outline the central themes of the article and what point of view the writer presents.
- You may also wish to give your overall impression of the article, remembering to write in formal academic English i.e. this may mean avoiding personal statements like 'I believe that...'

Body (about 80% of your word length)

The body of an article review will generally have two parts to it: (a) the summary and (b) the critique. The relative word lengths for each of these sections can vary from assessment to assessment, so you must read your course information details carefully.

(a) Summary

- In sentences and paragraphs, summarise the main points of the article in the same order the writer uses.
- Omit any descriptive details such as statistics and examples. Stick to the main points.
- Avoid using the same word combinations that the author uses. Write the main points in your own way.
- If writing in your own words, summarising or paraphrasing, you do not need to identify the author as you normally would when writing an essay.
- If you use quotations from the article, use quotation marks to make this clear.

(b) Critique

This is where you are expected to provide some critical response to the article. A critical response can include both positive and negative statements. This can be done using some of the following questions:

- *What is the main point or argument in the article?*
- *What is the writer's perspective or theoretical position?*
- *Are the writer's ideas similar or different to those of other writers?*
- *Do the writer's ideas help or hinder their argument?*
- *Is the writer biased in any way?*
- *Is the writer qualified to write in this area?*
- *Do you agree with the writer's ideas? Why? Why not?*
- *Is the text easy to understand or written in a very complicated way, with gaps in its definitions and/or methodology?*
- *How does the writer use other sources?*
- *Does the writer simplify complex ideas or make simple concepts difficult to grasp?*
- *Would you recommend this article to someone else interested in this subject?*

NB: Sometimes the summary and critique section (the body) can be ordered on a point-by-point basis, for example: Point 1 summary and critique, Point 2 summary and critique, Point 3 summary and critique, etc.

Conclusion (about 10% of your word length)

- Briefly sum up the article.
- Make some statement on the overall usefulness of the article on the topic e.g. who would or would not find it of interest and why?

(2) Annotated bibliographies

Annotated bibliographies are different to article reviews in that they usually consist of a number of different articles/readings about a particular subject area. They are also often shorter than article reviews.

Sometimes the student is asked to do a literature search and choose a specified number of recent articles on a given topic for their annotated bibliography. The process is then very similar to writing an article review for each of them so the guidelines given above can be followed.

It may be useful to compare the relative merits of the different articles in your annotated bibliography.

- *Which are saying similar things?*
- *Which provide a different viewpoint to the others?*

It is useful to do this once you have done a first draft of all of the bibliographies, so that you have a clear overview of the articles for comparison.

Example of one part of an annotated bibliography:

Fox, M & Wilkinson, L 1993, *English essentials*, Macmillan Education Australia, Melbourne.

This book is a valuable resource for students struggling with the mechanics of their writing. It was written specifically by the authors, both lecturers at Flinders University, to assist students to identify problems with their writing and remedy them. Topics include writing style, grammatical errors, sentence and paragraph construction, proofreading and the writing process. The book is written in a clear, simple, often amusing style that will appeal to students. Common mistakes are outlined and guidelines given on how to avoid them. While this book may not have a detailed enough explanation of language features for English as a second language learners, it is certainly a handy tool for those who need to fine tune their writing.

Other useful resources

Article Review

http://fbe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/647610/Critical_Review.pdf

http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/critical_review.pdf

<http://wwwdocs.fce.unsw.edu.au/fce/EDU/eduwritingcritreview.pdf>

Annotated Bibliography

<http://libguides.asu.edu/content.php?pid=264100&sid=2192365>

<http://userwww.sfsu.edu/~jnichols/Anobib.doc>

http://www.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/82742/annotate.pdf

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/annotated-bibliographies/>