

The Writing Center

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Many professors will ask you to complete a brief proposal where you tell them what your research questions are, how you've begun to research them, and the kinds of sources you've found. The annotated bibliography is an excellent way to prepare for the research paper itself.

What to Include in the Research Proposal

Here are the various parts your professor expects in this paper:

- your research question or questions and your interest in them
- which databases you have consulted (e.g. Academic Search Complete for the most general sources and some specific databases in your own area of interest—PAIS for political science, for example)
- how many titles on your subject
- the range of materials (articles, book chapters, books, newspaper articles—ideally, book chapters and academic articles)
- the area you hope to center in on
- any gaps you think might be waiting for you in the research
- your comments on sources as a whole after you've skimmed them
- your hopes about the eventual paper

What to Include in the Annotated Bibliography

Here is what your professor probably expects in an annotated bibliography:

- correct MLA citation of the sources in alphabetical order
- a brief (3-5 sentences) summary of the content of the source
- a brief reflection on how this source informs your paper
- a brief comment on any aspect of the source that you are puzzled about or have an opinion about

Here is an example of an entry for an annotated bibliography:

Ch'eng-wu, Fei. *Brush Drawing in the Chinese Manner*. London: Studio

Publications, 1957. Print.

This book provides some answers about why Sung Dynasty art is so contemplative: an art critic Ching Ho (c. 900-960) stipulated that superficiality was the worst fault a painting could have (no spirit). He also told a story of an ink maker from the Tang Dynasty who improved ink quality so much that he was given the imperial family name! Therefore, great value was put on writing/art.