Annotated Bibliographies

What is an Annotated Bibliography?
An Annotated Bibliography is a working list of properly cited references—books, journal articles, websites, etc.—that you will use for an essay, research paper, or project. What makes it different than a normal Works Cited page is that each reference citation is followed by a short summative and/or evaluative paragraph, which is called an annotation.

Thus, an Annotated Bibliography typically has two parts:
1. The citation of your source
2. Your annotation (the length of annotations will vary greatly depending on the type of annotation required, so be sure to read your assignment sheet carefully)

Types of Annotations
It is important to note that one annotation does not fit all purposes! There are different kinds of annotations that require you to write different things depending on the assignment’s goals. Here are some of the most common types of annotations:

1. **Summary/Informative Annotations**
   Summarizing annotations inform the reader of the source’s content and, in general, have a few defining features:
   - They condense and summarize the content of the source by identifying the main ideas and putting them in the writer’s own words (much like a book report)
   - When appropriate, they may describe an author’s methodology or argumentative approach (you might, for example, mention that the source is an ethnography or that the author employs a particular theory to make her argument)
   - They do not judge the work they are discussing—keep opinions out of it and stick to facts!

2. **Indicative Annotations**
   Indicative annotations do not attempt to include actual information from the source’s argument itself. Instead, they give general information about what kinds of questions or issues are addressed by the work. Indicative annotations generally do the following:
   - Define the scope of the source
   - List the general topics addressed
   - Avoid giving actual data or discussing the argument’s specific details as a summary does

3. **Critical/Evaluative Annotations**
   Evaluative annotations don’t just summarize. In addition to tackling the points addressed in summary annotations, evaluative annotations generally do the following:
   - Evaluate the credibility of the source (analyze for authority, accuracy, currency, objectivity, bias, etc.)
   - Analyze the intended audience (education, age, experience, needs, etc.)
   - Assess the usefulness or relevant application of the source to the writer’s own research topic or general field of study
4. **Combination Annotations**

An annotated bibliography may combine elements of some or all the previously listed types. In fact, most of them fall into this category: a little summarizing and describing, a little evaluation.

**Format**

Cite all of your sources as you would in a typical Works Cited or Reference page, following proper MLA or APA format. Although formatting requirements for the annotation under each citation may vary, here is a standard approach: All annotations listed under each source should be double spaced and indented a half inch (.5”) so that the author’s last name is the only text that is completely flush left, as shown below:


This article reviews differing “English for Specific Purposes” (ESP) trends in practice and in theory. Belcher categorizes the trends into three non-exclusive sects: sociodiscoursal, sociocultural, and sociopolitical. She then acknowledges the preconceived shortcomings of ESP in general, including its emphasis on “narrowly defined venues” (p. 165), its tendency to “help learners fit into, rather than contest, existing…structure” (p. 166), and its supposed “cookie-cutter” approach. In response to these common apprehensions about ESP, Belcher cites the New Rhetoric Movement and the Sydney School as two institutions that have influenced progressive changes and should be used as a model for continued program development (p. 167). Ultimately, Belcher presents accurate, timely data to support her points and utilizes current scholars in the field to create a credible argument. Although the article is written for an audience of highly educated linguists, the language is accessible enough to add clarity and depth to my research paper. It provides specific examples as well as expert opinion that I can use in my project to strengthen my credibility and support my claims about the direction I think ESL programs should be headed.