

## **EVALUATING SOURCES ASSIGNMENT**

### **TASK**

One of the most important skills when researching is to examine sources critically and evaluate different types of sources and literature. This task will allow you to analyze and evaluate the validity of multiple sources on a specific topic and determine which sources are the most valid for research.

Extra Help: Read Chapter 1 in the [MLA Handbook For Writers of Research Papers](#)

### **STEP 1: Topic Selection**

Students will survey a variety of sources on their thesis topic.

#### Characteristics of a Good Topic:

- ✓ Topic is interesting
- ✓ Topic is researchable
- ✓ Topic is significant
- ✓ Topic is manageable
- ✓ Topic is ethical and appropriate

### **STEP 2: Finding Sources**

Literature searching involves searching the library catalogues, indexes and databases, and Internet resources. For this assignment, you will need to find **FIVE (out of six)** of the following:

- Scholarly journal or article(online) \*
- Website
- Book
- Encyclopedia / electronic media
- Popular Writing (magazine or newspaper)
- Primary Document

\* *Final submission must include scholarly journal or article*

### **STEP 3: Citing your Sources: Works Cited**

As you find your FIVE sources, record the bibliographic information for each source. Follow the guidelines in the [MLA Handbook For Writers of Research Papers - Chapter 5](#) and use CITATION BUILDER (A link is located on the Thesis Website). The Works Cited must list the FIVE sources you find on your topic in proper MLA format.

#### **STEP 4: Evaluating Your Sources**

Once you have a source in hand, you will need to evaluate it. Obviously, the first thing to do is to determine if it really applies to your research topic. If it does, you then need to evaluate the quality of the information. *The key focus should be authority, accuracy and currency.*

- 1) Who is the author(s) of the work? When was the work published?
- 2) What are the author's credentials for writing and publishing this work?
- 3) When judged against your previous reading and your understanding of the subject, is the information correct? Is the information objective and impartial?
- 4) Does the author present evidence to support the interpretations made? Or does the source consist mainly of an individual's opinion?
- 5) Are the author's sources clearly and adequately indicated, so that they can be verified?
- 6) Are the author's sources current, or are they outdated?
- 7) Who is the publisher, or what is the sponsoring organization of the work?
- 8) How would you characterize the work? (ie. Scholarly vs popular)
- 9) Does the source add to the information you have already gathered about your topic?
- 10) Based on your evaluation, is this source a valid source for research?

#### **STEP 5: Annotated Bibliography**

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

Things to consider when completing an annotated bibliography:

- [Author](#)
- [Date of Publication](#)
- [Edition or Revision](#)
- [Publisher](#)
- [Evaluative Reviews](#)
- [Intended Audience](#)
- [Objective Reasoning](#)
- [Coverage](#)
- [Writing Style](#)

Write a concise annotation (150 words) for each of your **5** sources that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. The annotation should consist of the following:

- Brief summary / synopsis of source content
- Evaluation of author (background, credibility, education etc.)
- Assessments / criticisms of source: reliability, currency, objectivity, bias, intended audience, documentation of evidence, popular or scholarly writing etc.
- Reflection of source (ie. How does source fit your research; is source helpful? Is source too general / specific? How will this source illuminate your research / topic? Has this source helped you to narrow your topic?)

## **SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE**

The following example uses the MLA format for the journal citation:

**Holland, Suzanne. The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate : Science, Ethics, and Public Policy. Boston: MIT Press, 2001.**

This is the annotation of the above source. In this example, I am following MLA guidelines for the bibliographic information listed above. If I was really writing an annotation for this source, I would now be offering a brief summary of what this book says about stem cell research.

After a brief summary, it would be appropriate to assess this source and offer some criticisms of it. Does it seem like a reliable and current source? Why? Is the research biased or objective? Are the facts well documented? Who is the author? Is she qualified in this subject? Is this source scholarly, popular, some of both?

The length of your annotation will depend on the assignment or on the purpose of your annotated bibliography. After summarizing and assessing, you can now reflect on this source. How does it fit into your research? Is this a helpful resource? Too scholarly? Not scholarly enough? Too general/specific? Since "stem cell research" is a very broad topic, has this source helped you to narrow your topic?

### **STEP 6: Abstract a Source**

After you have identified and evaluated FIVE sources related to your topic, select the *most valid source* to complete an abstract. Abstracting involves locating, reviewing and summarizing the source. Complete the following in the abstract:

- ✓ Identify the information: proper MLA citation
- ✓ Summary of the main questions / arguments
- ✓ Overview of approach or methodology taken by the writer or researcher to support arguments / evidence
- ✓ Main conclusions made by writer or researcher
- ✓ Your viewpoint, including any questions, concerns or comments about the source

The abstract should be between 100 -150 words, 12 font, double spacing. All style of writing / sourcing / citing within the abstract should follow MLA format.

### **STEP 7: Final Submission**

Once you have completed the citation assignment, submit for assessment /evaluation:

- Works Cited (proper MLA format)
- Annotations for each source
- Copy of source of abstract (journal, article etc.)
- Abstract

## RUBRIC: ABSTRACTING

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
<i>Knowledge / Understanding</i>	The abstract exceptionally: - clarifies the main question or argument in the source - describes the main features of the approach of writer - summarizes the main points or conclusions in own words	The abstract: -clarifies the main question or argument in article -describes the main features of the approach of writer -summarizes main points or conclusions in own words	The abstract adequately: -clarifies the main question or argument in article -describes the main features of the approach of writer -summarizes main points or conclusions in own words	The abstract rarely or poorly: -clarifies the main question or argument in article -describes the main features of the approach of writer -summarizes main points or conclusions in own words
<i>Thinking / Inquiry</i>	The abstract exceptionally: -identifies the basis or point of view -includes a personal response (questions, concerns) based on own knowledge or experience -illustrates coherence and clarity of argument, critique and analysis	The abstract: -identifies the basis or point of view -includes a personal response (questions, concerns) based on own knowledge or experience -illustrates coherence and clarity of argument, critique and analysis	The abstract adequately: -identifies the basis or point of view -includes a personal response (questions, concerns) based on own knowledge or experience -illustrates coherence and clarity of argument, critique and analysis	The abstract rarely or poorly: -identifies the basis or point of view -includes a personal response (questions, concerns) based on own knowledge or experience -illustrates coherence and clarity of argument, critique and analysis
<i>Communication</i>	Writing Style and Format is exceptionally: -clear and concise -appropriate length 150words -grammar, punctuation and spelling correct	Writing Style and Format: -clear and concise -appropriate length 150 words -grammar, punctuation and spelling correct	Writing Style and format is adequately: -clear and concise -somewhat appropriate length 150 words -grammar, punctuation and spelling need editing	Weak writing style and format: -needs to be more clear and concise -lack the appropriate length 150 words -weak grammar, punctuation and spelling
<i>Application</i>	-exceptional scholarly academic writing style used -always follows MLA format in works cited and abstract	-scholarly, academic writing style is used -usually uses MLA format in works cited and abstract	-more scholarly and academic writing required -sometimes uses MLA format	-lack of scholarly academic writing -rarely uses proper MLA format

Comments / mark: