

How to Annotate Effectively

An effective annotation provides a summary of key ideas in a source and an evaluation of the source's usefulness. However, many students waste time creating superficial annotations that merely "describe" the contents of sources. A description is NOT a summary. Notice how the annotation on the left uses specific language that explains, while the annotation on the right uses generic language that describes.

EFFECTIVE Annotation (Summarizes and Evaluates Source)	INEFFECTIVE Annotation (Describes Contents of Source)
<p style="text-align: center;">Annotated Bibliography</p> <p>Richtel, Matt. "Digital Devices Deprive Brain of Needed Downtime." <i>NYTimes.com</i>. The New York Times Company, 24 Aug. 2010. Web. 06 Dec. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com>.</p> <p>Dr. John Ratey of Harvard Medical School claims that digital devices like televisions, iPods, and smart phones help people perform healthy activities (like exercise) they would otherwise find boring. However, Richtel cautions that the overstimulation of the brain caused by digital devices impedes long-term learning and deep relaxation. New research suggests the brain needs down time to process and internalize new experiences. Moreover, people who rely on digital devices to relax or "pass the time" are actually taxing their brains. Still, people interviewed by Richter delude themselves into thinking they are multitasking. This article supports my research because it raises concerns about the impact of digital devices on learning. Richtel implies learning gets lost if the brain never "disconnects," an observation corroborated by teacher complaints of students who can use technology to learn but cannot remember what they learned.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Annotated Bibliography</p> <p>Richtel, Matt. "Digital Devices Deprive Brain of Needed Downtime." <i>NYTimes.com</i>. The New York Times Company, 24 Aug. 2010. Web. 06 Dec. 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com>.</p> <p>This article discusses the negative side effects of digital devices on the brain. The author quotes leading scientists on both sides of the argument. Some say that digital devices are beneficial, but most say they are harmful. This article will help me understand the latest science on technology and the brain.</p> <p>Unlike the annotation on the left, this annotation neglects to identify key ideas in the article. The annotation is so superficial that it is essentially "empty." It could have been "faked" by anyone who merely glanced at the title! On the other hand, the annotation on the left provides information that could only have been gleaned through "real" reading. Your teachers and professors can tell the difference.</p>

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