

ARTICLE ANNOTATION GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will help students to understand and annotate the article critically. Students should use these guidelines in order to present the key issues of the article and complete the written assignment.

Article Information

Title: (1 point)	Write the title of the article here. Titles will tell you a lot about the content of the article: the geographical focus, period, subject, and, sometimes, something about the author's approach or interpretation (which may be indicated by a play on words or a question mark). You can also use this space to comment on what the title leads you to expect from the article.
Author(s): (1 point)	Note the authors of the paper. If you know who he or she is, then make a note of that, too. What is the author's discipline?
Source: (1 point)	Where was this article published? Note the original source of the article. The publication it appeared in can lend or deny the material credibility.

Analysis Information

Examine the article as a whole. Try to determine something about the purpose, audience, and content of the paper **before** you start reading. Look for clues in the title and/or subtitle, the acknowledgements (if any), the first foot/end note, and the author's biographical note (sometimes with the article, sometimes compiled separately).

Purpose: (6 points)	Why do you think the author wrote this paper? Does it seem to be refuting someone else's interpretation of some event or phenomenon? Is it offering new information? You'll usually find clues to the answer to these questions in the first few paragraphs. That's where authors usually try to show why their paper is useful and worth reading.
Audience: (6 points)	Who is this paper written for? Experts? The general public? Knowing who the authors are addressing can help you decide how to approach the article. If the authors are addressing an expert audience, then the style will likely be more academic. There may be fewer explanations or somewhat less background information. If the audience is a broader one, then there may be more detail but less detailed explanations.
Subject: (6 points)	What does it seem the article is about? Look at the first couple of paragraphs; they should give you some hints. Again, refer to the title. Some

	disciplines include an abstract that precedes the text. This will give you an uncritical summary of the paper's subject/content.
Sources: (6 points)	Where is the author getting her or his basic information? Is it mostly from other books or articles? Is it based on interview, archival or survey data? Knowing where the author got the information will tell you whether the author is looking at something new, taking a new look at something old, or talking about something new.

Primary Details

Start reading. If the article has a labeled introduction, you should find the author's statement of purpose, or thesis statement, before the end of that section. You should also be able to tell what evidence the author is going to use to support the position she or he has taken. The author may also explain the limits on the article, the length of time, the geographic location, the extent of the information that's going to be used, the theories that are going to be applied. You should also be able to tell what the author's point of view is.

Thesis: (6 points)	Write out the thesis statement as you find it in the article. It is sometimes only one sentence; sometimes two or three. Sometimes the sentences are separated from each other. An author might be obvious about it: "This paper will argue. . ." or subtle, giving only a statement of his or her interpretation followed by some indication of the evidence that will support that position.
Evidence: (6 points)	Note here what evidence the author claims will be used to support her/his argument. This question may well have been answered in the first step, by checking the notes. Use this stop to expand your grasp of the evidence.
Limits: (6 points)	Writers of articles rarely tackle big topics. There isn't enough room to write a history of the world or discuss big issues. Articles generally focus on a particular event, change, person, phenomenon, or idea. It may be further limited by a narrow geographic focus, a limited period, or being restricted to a particular group of people. Note what limits the author places on the article.
Point of View: (6 points)	This is sometimes easy to detect; sometimes you have to feel it out by looking at what things are described positively and what are described negatively. Note what you learn about the author's point of view.

Presentation and Argumentation

Keep reading but watch what the author is doing. This step requires that you read the article to gain an understanding of how the author presents the evidence and makes it fit into the argument. At this stage of the exercise, you should also take the time to look up any unfamiliar words or concepts. Also, watch how the author switches from first explaining how the evidence supports the argument and then to the summary. The last few paragraphs of the article should tidy up the discussion, show how it all fits together neatly, where more research is needed, or how this article has advanced knowledge, that is, the implications of the article.

Concepts/Words: (6 points)	Use this space to note the words or concepts you had to look up. Did the author coin his/her own terms, or use common terms in unusual ways?
Use of Evidence: (6 points)	How well did the author rely on his/her evidence? Was everything mentioned at the outset referred to in the article? Was quoted material used to illustrate or substantiate points? You may not have much to say for this section, or you might notice that materials listed in the bibliography or reference were not used in the paper.
Conclusion: (6 points)	You can either write out the author's conclusions (though they're often a paragraph or so long), or you can summarize where the author went with the paper. You may refer to the thesis statement to help you phrase your summary.
Implications: (6 points)	This is where you might note what the points the author has made might mean in a larger context. What might government officials make of this paper? Who might find it useful? Would anyone change the way they work, or approach an issue if they read this article? What difference has it made for you? You might also consider why your instructor has asked you to read this article. What new course-related information did it contain? Was the article assigned because it illustrated ideas or concepts covered in the course? Perhaps the author advanced thinking in the discipline. What do you think?

Source: A Guide to Reading and Analysing Academic Articles
<http://ycdl4.yukoncollege.yk.ca/~agraham//guides/guidec.shtml> – Amanda Graham at Yukon College, Canada

Evaluation

Now that you've finished reading, consider your personal reaction to it: not only "did I like it?," "it was hard to read," or "it was boring/interesting." This, along with the work in the other steps, is the basis for a *critical* evaluation of the article. Even if you don't know anything about the topic, you can make some judgements about the article and how well the author made her or his case. Evaluation is a bit harder. "Evaluating" means comparing one thing to some kind of standard, that

is, other articles in the same discipline or journal as the one you've read. If you are not familiar with those other articles, it can be hard to evaluate well. However, you can do a fairly good job of it by considering the *conventions* of other, similar articles. Does this one fit the pattern? Does it have quality, that is, does it make up to the academic standards of writing, presentation, organization, source citation, and such?

Personal Reaction: (5 points)	This is where you note your personal reaction to the paper. Your comments might be one or two words, or might be longer. Remember, too, that these notes will allow you to quickly review the article later on. You might do well to write your future self fairly detailed notes.
Strength of Case: (5 points)	Did the author persuade you that the point/argument she/he was making was true, or at least convincing? Did you feel, at any time, that the author was just hoping you'd agree? Use this space to note how convincing you thought the article was.
Evaluation: (5 points)	Use this space to note how good this article was compared to other articles, either in the discipline/area, or in the same journal. It is helpful to write pages numbers of relevant passages in the article.
Quality: (5 points)	Use this space to record your sense of the quality of the paper. In most published articles, the quality will be quite high. Many people contribute to helping an author revise and refine a paper and what you see published is rarely what the author originally wrote. There may be some technical problems, like spelling mistakes or formatting problems that you might note.
Other: (5 points)	Use this space and the ones below to record anything else you might need to know about the article either to write a summary or a review or to remember about it so you can read the summary sheet instead of reading the article again before tests or exams or for referring to it in a paper.