

How to Construct an Effective Final Bibliography

A. What is Included in a Bibliography? A Final Check

Let's rewind one final time. From the IBO's viewpoint, "a bibliography is an alphabetical list of every source used to research and write the essay" (International Baccalaureate Organization 2007). So, what does "use" mean? Do you include your background reading, too? This can be confusing, if you used the ideas, but they are not cited in your paper. Again, from the IBO: "Sources that are not cited in the body of the essay, but were important in informing the approach taken, should be cited in the introduction or in an acknowledgement. The bibliography should list only those sources cited." In other words, if you use a direct quote, a paraphrase or a summary note card in the body of your paper, you must have a corresponding entry on your bibliography. Likewise, there should absolutely no, zip, zero entries on your bibliography that *aren't* in your paper. If you look at the student exemplars (examples) that the IBO releases and shares that include evaluator comments, students are consistently hammered on the bibliography page for missing entries or entries that appear but have no in-text citations. Basically, if you have ten different texts cited at various points in your extended essay, there should be exactly ten different entries in your bibliography. No more, no less! So double check, or else you stand to lose points.

B. Acknowledging Background Reading

If you feel compelled to note background reading that you did not use in your paper but led you to your research question, do not write an acknowledgement—at the risk of having an awkward extra section—but include it briefly in your introduction. Please note that you do not have to do this, but you may. Perhaps a particular article or book sparked your initial interest in the topic—this is where it would be appropriate to do so. By no means should your introduction be a large list rambling off every piece of background reading you completed, however!

C. Model of Final Bibliography (MLA example)

Bibliography
Jarrell, Randall. "Robert Frost's 'Home Burial.'" <i>Critical Reading and Writing Across the Disciplines</i> . Ed. Cyndia Susan Clegg. New York: Holt, 1988. Print.
Malinski, Sean. "Anger and Sorrow in 'Home Burial' by Robert Frost." <i>Journal of American Poetics</i> 57.4 (1993): 27-49. Print.

Again, your formatting will differ according to your document style (MLA, APA, Chicago). I would recommend that you copy and paste from your saved word document for your annotated bibliography rather than erase your annotated bibliography explanations, just in case. Once your final draft is done, double-check one final time to make sure that:

- ___ 1. Each reference in your paper has a matching entry in your bibliography
- ___ 2. No extra entries remain in your bibliography with no references in your essay
- ___ 3. Your entries have no spelling or punctuation errors
- ___ 4. Margins all align
- ___ 5. Your entries are parallel (if one entry requires a period at the end, they all have them)

Models of bibliographies in your documentation style can easily be found online or in manual guidebooks.