

Guidelines for Writing Synthesis

Setting goals: Your goal in writing a synthesis is to create and participate in a discussion, joining your views on a topic to the views of others. Specifically you want to do the following:

1. Understand your purpose for writing.
2. Define your topic and your thesis.
3. Read the work of others who have written on this topic to understand, respond to, and evaluate.
4. Forge relationships among sources; link the thinking of others to your own thinking.
5. Create a discussion governed by your own views; draw on sources as contributors to a discussion that you design and control.

A Strategy for Forging Relationship among Sources

1. Read multiple sources on a topic.
2. Subdivide the topic into parts and give each a brief title.
3. Cross-reference your sources for each part.
4. Summarize authors' information or ideas about each part
5. Identify connections among readings, which may be related by comparison, contrast, example, definition, or by extent of your agreement or disagreement with particular selections.

Do Not Become Invisible in Your Essay:

Danger Signs:

1. Your paragraphs are devoted wholly to the authors you are synthesizing.
2. Virtually every sentence introduces someone else's ideas.

Synthesis: Writing a Paper Based on Sources

1. Read the sources on the topic; subdivide the topic into parts and infer relationship among parts, cross-referencing sources when possible.
2. Clarify relationships among authors by posing these questions:
 - a. Which authors agree?
 - b. Which authors disagree?
 - c. Are there any similar examples provided in different sources?
 - d. Can I offer any definitions?
3. Write a thesis that ensures your voice is heard and that allows you to develop sections of the paper in which you refer to sources.
4. Sketch an outline of your paper, organizing your discussion by summary; filter the name of these authors into your outline along with notes indicating how these authors will contribute to your discussion.
5. Write a draft of your paper following these steps.