

# Writing a Synthesis Essay

## 1. What is a synthesis?

A synthesis is a written discussion incorporating support from several sources of differing views. This type of assignment requires that you examine a variety of sources and identify their relationship to your thesis.

## 2. Synthesis is used in:

- Analysis papers to examine related theories.
  - For example a comparison between the theories of evolution or who shot JFK.
- Research papers to incorporate multiple sources.
  - For example looking at economic and social effects of proposed legislation.
- Argument papers to compare differing views and support a coherent claim.
  - For example, is Turn it in a violation of student's rights? One side may argue that the company steals students' papers while others claim that students agree to have their work archived.
- Business reports to examine differing ideas and blend into a coherent plan.
  - For example, what are some of the plans to improve Toledo's waterfront to attract more visitors and increase business opportunities?

## 3. Tips for an effective synthesis essay:

- Establish your purpose to shape the way you want to argue and form your thesis. The thesis is the main claim or idea of your essay.
- Select your sources and become familiar with them so that you can discuss them in relationship to your thesis and supporting argument(s). If you simply quote sources without evaluating them then the sources will control your paper and your audience will may misinterpret the information.
- Develop an organizational plan. Arrange more than just one source per point; multiple sources will increase your credibility. Look at how sources may agree or disagree with one another and evaluate which source has better logic or more credibility.
- Evaluate or interpret each source, then show the relationship between the sources and your thesis.
- Document each source; note the author and page number as well as listing the source on the Works Cited page to avoid plagiarism. This MUST be done if you quote, summarize or paraphrase a source.

#### 4. Strategies for organization:

- Climactic order- arranges the most important/persuasive evidence last since this is what is remembered.
- Problem/solution-establishes the problem in the introduction, then offers a few solutions.
- Comparison and contrast-
  - Summarizes each source and shows their similarities and differences
  - Can move from point-to-point, back and forth between items being compared.
  - Can be set into blocks, where one item is completely discussed before moving on to the next.

#### 5. Analyze the position of each source; you can use these verbs to note the author's tone:

##### **Argumentative:**

affirms  
argues  
confirms  
contends  
denies  
disagrees  
believes  
concedes  
insists  
rejects  
responds  
emphasizes

##### **Research:**

adds  
reveals  
states  
mentions  
finds  
verifies

##### **Emphasis:**

alleges  
warns  
advises  
admits  
complains  
holds  
predicts  
proposes  
acknowledges  
speculates  
suggests

#### 6. Which tense do I use?

MLA- use present tense: Shakespeare writes...

APA- use past tense: Dr. Bombay affirmed the value...