

How to Write a Synthesis

Synthesis writing: combining the key themes/points of more than one source with your own ideas.

Key Features of a Synthesis

- Paraphrasing is used to convey the correct meaning of the text while maintaining its integrity.
- The key themes / points from the different sources are organised in a structured way that reflects unified thinking.
- The relevance, validity and context of each source are analysed to help the reader understand the sources in greater depth.

Preparing to Write Your Synthesis Essay

The synthesis preparation section of the end of semester exam (DE) should help you to identify the key themes/points of each source. You now need to explore different ways to organize this information depending on what you want to demonstrate or place your focus on in the synthesis. A good idea would be to construct a brief plan before you start writing your synthesis. This will help you to determine how many paragraphs you will need and will help you to form links between paragraphs to enhance meaning.

The Structure of Your Synthesis

A. The Introduction:

The introduction states the sources of the texts, the authors, the publication dates and gives a concise outline of the key themes/points and focus of the synthesis. It may also provide relevant background information about the authors and the sources of the texts.

For example:

The focus of this paper is to understand and evaluate the process involved in applying for university in the UK. In the article, "Some students are more equal than others", published in the Guardian Unlimited, on the 16 January 2003, Polly Curtis deals with the theme of student inequality in English universities. The article addresses the question of whether or not positive discrimination policies implemented in UK universities are resolving issues of student inequality.....

B. The Main Body of Your Synthesis:

The organisation of the main body of your synthesis will be determined by the key themes/points present in each source and their relation to one another in terms of similarities, differences, contradictions, oppositions etc. You must choose the most effective structure to represent the focus of your synthesis.

Make sure that each paragraph:

- Begins with a sentence or phrase that informs readers of the purpose of the paragraph;
- Clearly indicates where each theme/point comes from using transitions to aid general cohesion;
- Uses appropriate quotes, with the sources of the quotes clearly identified.

You must also make sure that:

- You do not plagiarise. If you can correctly paraphrase and quote from a text then this should not be an issue.
- You avoid the shopping list effect, where you fail to identify the key themes/points present in each source and their relation to one another in terms of similarities, differences, contradictions, oppositions etc and instead resort to listing the key themes/points (this person said this and then this person said that....)

C. Conclusion:

The conclusion provides a final perspective that reflects the focus of the synthesis and allows for independence of thought. You must give your own opinion!

Checking Your Own Writing and That of Your Peers

Read a peer's synthesis and then answer the following questions:

- Is it clear what is being synthesised? (i.e.: Did your peer correctly introduce the sources of the texts, the authors and the publication dates?)
- Is it always clear which source your peer is talking about at any given moment?
- Is the key theme/point of each text clear in the synthesis? (Write out what you think each key theme/point is.)
- Did your peer include opinions in his or her synthesis?



If there is time, answer the following questions

- What is the organisational structure of the essay? (Draw a plan/diagram)
- In what way does this structure work? (If not, how might your peer revise it?)
- Is each paragraph structured effectively? (Draw a plan/diagram)

Evaluation Criteria

<u>Structure (6 points)</u>	<u>Content (6 points)</u>	<u>Language (8 points)</u>
<i>Introduction & conclusion</i>	<i>General cohesion</i>	<i>Grammar</i>
<i>Paragraph structure</i>	<i>Pertinent emphasis of key</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>
<i>Transitions</i>	<i>themes / points</i>	<i>Punctuation</i>
<i>Appropriate introduction of quotes</i>	<i>Identification of similarities / differences</i>	<i>Syntax</i>
<i>Correct citation of sources</i>	<i>Summary of contents</i>	<i>Faux-amis</i>
<i>Etc.</i>	<i>Etc.</i>	<i>Etc.</i>
<u> /6</u>	<u> /6</u>	<u> /8</u>
Corrector's Comments:	Corrector's Comments:	Corrector's Comments:

Key for Correction Symbols

Key for Correction Symbols	
S	spelling error
G	grammatical error
V	vocabulary
	delete word
^	add word
W	word order
P	punctuation
	any issues that need attention