

How to Write A Synthesis

Synthesis requires you to collect different things and use them to create a coherent pattern. You may be asked to bring together several assigned readings or sources you found through library research to address an issue or reveal what is known on a subject. You may also be asked to write a review of literature on a subject or write a report tying together a number of previous reports.

In a synthesis, you put together the ideas and information of a number of sources to find an overall pattern. In a review of literature, the focus of the synthesis is on the different ways the various sources treat the subject. In a synthesis report, the focus is on how the information fits together to lead to conclusions or an overview of the subject.

1. Identify appropriate texts to use. You may find it helpful to use notes and references in one scholarly source to find other relevant sources.
2. Read the sources carefully in relation to your purpose. Take notes or annotate copies of your research in order to retrieve relevant information easily.
3. Think about the connections among the various sources. Do the sources agree or disagree on major or minor points? Does one source provide background for another? Does one source take up where another leaves off? Does one source provide an example of an idea discussed in another source? Do any common ideas or viewpoints run through all the sources?
4. Based on the pattern of connections you have seen among the various sources, develop an overall point or conclusion to serve as the organizing thesis of your synthesis. If you are writing a review of literature, your thesis statement should focus on how the various texts relate to each other. If you are writing a synthesis report, your thesis statement should focus on your conclusion about the topic itself.
5. Develop a plan for presenting the various parts of the information in a unified way.
6. Write a first draft of the synthesis. Develop the points made in each of the paragraphs through details from your various sources. Use quotations, paraphrasing, and summary to present the information from the sources.
7. Document the sources of your information, using an appropriate parenthetical reference or footnote method.
8. Revise the draft, paying particular attention to the transitions that tie the various parts of the synthesis together and to the overall coherence of the presentation. Make sure you maintain a consistency of tone and focus throughout the paper. Do not let the variety of sources you use lead the writing in different directions.