

WRITING A SYNTHESIS

A synthesis combines information and ideas from two or more sources. You need to be able to infer relationships among essays, articles, and/or book chapters. In a synthesis you make explicit the relationships you have inferred among separate pieces of writing.

1. Read the passage(s) carefully.
2. Reread, labeling or underlining each passage for main ideas, key terms.
3. Determine the relationship among the passages. Which relationship seems most appropriate:
 - a. information seems to constitute a description or definition of something.
 - b. information may serve as examples of some propositions expressed in several of the passages.
 - c. information may be compared and/or contrasted.
 - d. information may be used as the basis for an argument.
4. Write the thesis sentence: indicate the central idea that holds together the main points of the synthesis and the relationship among the main points.
5. Write the first draft of your synthesis, including the lead-in for your thesis. Here's a helpful "workhorse" organizational structure:

Thesis paragraph (thesis sentence may be final sentence)
transition
Example A (built on first passage)
transition
Example B (build on second passage)
transition
Example C (build on third passage)
Conclusion Don't try to discuss every aspect of every piece of writing; use only what you need to support your thesis.
6. Revise.

Adapted from Behrens and Rosen, *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, Little Brown, 1982.