



Creating Effective Synthesis Essays

Synthesis is the process of integrating outside sources into your essay in order to enhance the quality of the writing, provide credible evidence for your claims, and to better meet the needs of your audience. The skills used to integrate outside sources are summary, paraphrase and quotation. To create effective synthesis essays, follow these best practices. Follow the rules for documentation (MLA, APA, etc.).

Tips

1. Use the best evidence.

Quote, summarize and paraphrase from a wide range of reliable and credible sources. Be sure the quote, summary or paraphrase actually helps prove your claim. It's best to use scholarly sources to support claims and develop your thinking. Using a single book throughout a 10 page essay suggests there is not much support for your claims, which will weaken your argument. Avoid questionable source materials, especially from the internet, in favor of scholarly articles, books, films, government documents, etc.

2. Paraphrase accurately, fully, and often.

To effectively synthesize your ideas with the ideas of others, writers should engage in paraphrasing. The wording must be changed significantly, while remaining true to the original idea. Change phrasing and sentence structure to help make the expression more original. Simply finding the synonyms for a few words in the original will not yield an effective paraphrase. It could be considered a form of plagiarism.

Paraphrasing is an intellectual process that requires writers to fully understand the original idea well before they can translate it into their own words. Therefore engaging in successful paraphrasing causes student mastery of the ideas in play, which helps the writer reach a higher level of expression of their own ideas in the essay.

3. Quote selectively.

Since we want to paraphrase more than quote, when we do quote, we want to only quote material which is striking or memorable, which cannot be easily paraphrased or comes from a source with a high level of credibility on your subject. Using quote after quote after quote sends the signal to your reader, or teacher, that you have not taken the time to develop an understanding of your subject, that you do not have much to say, and can only offer what others have to say. Therefore, maintain authorship of your essay by using quotation sparingly.



4. Introduce quotes.

Beginning a sentence or a paragraph with a quotation leads to breakdowns in coherence and clarity. Readers need to know a quote is coming and who it is coming from. If the source is not well known, then introduce them, literally, to your reader by stating their credentials, so your readers have see they are credible and should be listened to; however, some documentation systems, like APA, discourage this move.

5. Summarize accurately.

When summarizing source material, double check your summary accurately reflects the ideas of the original. Include only the main, relevant points in your summary.

6. Integrate evidence.

Outside material needs to be fully integrated into the flow of your ideas in your essay. Writers need to connect the evidence — expert testimony, studies, statistics, charts, etc. — from outside sources to the purpose of paragraph and essay overall to communicate a unified message clearly. Connect your claims to the evidence. How does the outside material support your claim, fulfill your purpose? Spell it out for your reader in each paragraph. The longer the quote, the longer your commentary, which can be an argument, analysis, explanation, etc.

Student Example

Preparing the American worker for employment in a globalized workforce will be paramount to the country's success as an international labor market. In Pulitzer-Prize winner Thomas Friedman's best seller *The World is Flat*, he explains the importance of learning skills that are relevant for the jobs that will be most successful in a worldwide market. As globalization becomes more prevalent, jobs will go to the workers who are the most productive, specialized or willing to work at the cheapest rates (239). Since the United States' standard of living makes it nearly impossible to compete with the rest of the world in terms of cost, having specialized skills will be critical for success. Friedman argues that educators will have the responsibility to explore and teach these skill sets, as the previous education model will no longer be effective. The new curriculum will need to be rooted in keeping these students competitive in the global market (240). The educational concentrations taught and studied at high schools, colleges, and trade schools will need to reflect the changes that arise as a result of a globalized world. Judy and D'Amico echo the importance of education in the globalized world: "For those who maintain and improve their skills, the changes should bring increasing rewards. But the changes may be traumatic for those who fall behind the skills curve and resist retraining" (236). For example, the typical American worker will need to be more intellectually flexible than ever before. A student studying electrical engineering will need to study semiconductors and electromagnetism, but they will



also need to have a strong understanding of how to interact with people from other cultures. In order to be fully prepared for the globalized market, the American worker will need to have both a specialized vocation and the ability to effectively communicate with anyone, anywhere on the globe.

This paragraph exemplifies effective synthesis because:

- The source material is fully integrated with the student writing
- The writer creates clear connections between source ideas and writer's claims
- The writer uses paraphrase more than quotation
- The paragraph begins and ends with the student's ideas, not source material
- The writer does not overwhelm readers with too many quotes
- The writer is clearly in control of the paragraph

Additional Resources

- [Using Evidence](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: *Inquiry to Academic Writing*. Lidinsky & Greene. Bedford St. Martins: Purdue OWL.