

Combine, Compare, Connect- Synthesizing in Academic Writing

What Is Synthesis?

Synthesis is the process of combining information from multiple sources to form a cohesive understanding, argument, or conclusion. It goes beyond summarizing—synthesis requires you to compare, contrast, and connect ideas.

1. Read with Purpose

- ✓ Identify the main ideas of each source.
 - ✓ Ask yourself: *What is the author's argument or purpose?*
 - ✓ Highlight key points, evidence, and perspectives.
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2. Look for Patterns

- ✓ Group sources by theme, perspective, or methodology.
 - ✓ Note similarities and differences.
 - ✓ Identify any trends, contradictions, or gaps in the research.
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3. Create a Synthesis Matrix (*Optional Tool*)

Theme/Topic	Source A	Source B	Source C
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Key Argument			
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Evidence			
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Implications			
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4. Use Synthesis Verbs

Use these verbs to help you compare and contrast:

- Agrees with / Supports

- Challenges / Contradicts
 - Extends / Builds on
 - Emphasizes / Highlights
 - Suggests / Proposes
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5. Integrate Smoothly

- ✓ Blend ideas from different authors using your own voice.
 - ✓ Avoid a “source-by-source” structure—combine ideas by topic instead.
 - ✓ Use transition phrases like:
 - “While Smith (2021) argues that..., Johnson (2020) counters by...”
 - “Several researchers agree that..., yet others point out...”
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6. Maintain Your Voice

- ✓ Your analysis should guide the reader.
 - ✓ Don’t let the sources take over—your synthesis is the focus.
 - ✓ Always interpret and comment on what the sources mean for your argument.
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7. Cite Appropriately

- ✓ Always cite your sources clearly to avoid plagiarism.
 - ✓ Follow APA, MLA, or the required citation style.
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✓ Final Tips

- Plan before writing—outline themes first.
- Revise for clarity—make sure your synthesis flows logically.
- Ask: How do these sources work together to support my point?

References:

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