

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING SYNTHESSES

Although writing syntheses cannot be reduced to a lockstep method, it should help you to follow guidelines listed in the following box.

- ◆ **Consider your purpose in writing.** What are you trying to accomplish in your essay? How will this purpose shape the way you approach your sources?
- ◆ **Select and carefully read your sources,** according to your purpose. Then reread the passages, mentally summarizing each. Identify those aspects or part of your sources that will help you in fulfilling your purpose. When rereading, label the sources for main ideas, key terms, and any details you want to use in the synthesis.
- ◆ **Take notes on your reading.** In addition to labeling or underlining key points in the readings, you might write brief one-or-two-sentence summaries of each source. This will help you in formulating your thesis statement, and in choosing and organizing your sources later.
- ◆ **Formulate a thesis.** Your thesis is the main idea that you want to present in your synthesis. It should be expressed as a complete sentence. You might do some pre-drafting about the ideas discussed in the readings in order to help you work out a thesis. If you've written one-sentence summaries of the readings, looking these over will help you make connections between readings and devise a thesis. Sometimes the thesis is the first sentence, but more often it is the final sentence of the first paragraph. If you are writing an inductively arranged synthesis, the thesis sentence may not appear until the final paragraphs.
- ◆ **Decide how you will use your source material.** How will the information and the ideas in the passages help you fulfill your purpose?
- ◆ **Develop an organizational plan,** according to your thesis. How will you arrange your material? It is not necessary to prepare a formal outline. But you should have some plan that will indicate the order in which you will present your material and that will indicate the relationship among your sources.
- ◆ **Draft the topic sentences for main sections**
- ◆ **Write the first draft of your synthesis,** following your organizational plan. However, be flexible with your plan. As you write you may discover new ideas and may need to change your ideas, topic sentences and/or thesis.
- ◆ **Document your sources.** You **must** give credit to the sources you use by citing the sources in the body of your synthesis and providing full citation information in a "Works Cited" list at the end of your paper.
- ◆ **Revise, Revise, Revise.** Revise your synthesis. Make sure that your synthesis reads smoothly, logically and clearly from beginning to end. Finally, check grammar, punctuation and spelling.¹

¹Information adapted from: Tryoka, Lynn. HANDBOOK FOR WRITERS. Simon and Schuster, 6th edition.