

# SYNTHESISING

## What exactly is synthesis?

Synthesising is a critical skill that is required in academic writing. It is the process of combining ideas from various sources to group and present common ideas or arguments.

Synthesising is not simply summarising and paraphrasing the source material one author at a time. It is combining the ideas from multiple sources to show the relationship between them.

## Synthesis enables you to:

- combine information and ideas from multiple sources to develop and strengthen your argument.
- show that you have done extensive research on the subject.
- Use and cite a variety of sources.

## How do you synthesise?

To synthesise information from various sources, use the steps outlined below:

- Read the source material.
- Take down notes on any key information to be able to compare it.
- Determine common concepts and ideas.
- Identify common ideas.
- Cite (reference) all the authors you have used.

## Note-taking for synthesising

Make a list of the most important points and always cite your sources.

## Synthesising from notes

Examine your notes for similar arguments as well as any counterarguments. Combine these to support your arguments. Cite your sources correctly in APA7. Please note that the example information is not accurate:

Text 1: (Johns, 2019)	Text 2: (Sully, 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relieves stress</li><li>• Leads to less mind-wandering habits</li><li>• Boosts cognitive abilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in reduced cortisol levels in body</li><li>• Leads to greater attention and focus abilities</li></ul>
Text 3: (Smith, 2017)	Text 4: (Rix, 2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can lead to revisiting traumatic events in one's life</li><li>• Can lead to depersonalisation</li><li>• Might result in forgetfulness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can lead to an upheaval of negative emotions internally</li><li>• Leads to feelings of complacency and passive attitude towards life-depersonalisation</li><li>• May affect the memory negatively</li></ul>

## Example synthesis

Johns (2019) and Sully (2020) both argue that mindfulness can lead to reduced levels of stress, leading to less mind-wandering habit patterns as well as potentially giving a boost to one's ability to plan and direct attention. Others argue, however, that despite having some positive results, mindfulness may result in experiencing depersonalisation, an upheaval of negative emotions and memory loss (Rix, 2018; Smith, 2017).

Adapted from: RMIT University. (n.d.) Synthesising. <https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/synthesising-0>

### Example 1: No synthesis

This sample paragraph below begins with one idea and then abruptly shifts to another. The author describes the content of the sources rather than comparing them. This causes the paragraph to take an unexpected turn at the end, preventing it from expressing any strong arguments or conclusions.

Parents are always trying to find ways to encourage healthy eating in their children. Ben-Joseph (2020), a doctor and writer for *KidsHealth*, encourages parents to be role models for their children by not dieting or vocalizing concerns about their body image. The first popular diet began in 1863. Banting (1963) named it the *Banting diet* after himself, and it consisted of eating fruits, vegetables, meat, and dry wine. Even though dieting has been around for over a hundred and fifty years, parents should not diet because it hinders children's understanding of healthy eating.

Adapted from Avant Guardian Musing: <http://www.dorothybarencott.com/http://www.dorothybarencott.com/2020/6/12/focus-on-fundamentals-what-is-synthesis>

### Example 1: Synthesis

In the next example below, the author shows links between the sources used. Instead of simply describing the content of the sources in order, the author employs transitions, such as "similarly" and other language to highlight the relationship between the sources.

Parents are always trying to find ways to encourage healthy eating in their children. Different scientists and educators have different strategies for promoting a well-rounded diet while still encouraging body positivity in children. Just and Price (2015) suggest that children are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables if they are given a reward. Similarly, Ben-Joseph (2020), a doctor and writer for *Kids Health*, encourages parents to be role models for their children. The author states that parents may foster these negative feelings in their kids if they openly complain about dieting and weight. Nepper and Chai (2018) support Ben-Joseph's suggestions stating that when parents showed patience and consistency in nutrition and what is talked about and eaten in

the household, this had more chance of imparting a healthy nutritional education to their children. In applying these as strategies at home, parents can help their children develop healthy eating habits while still maintaining body positivity.

Adapted from Avant Guardian Musing: <http://www.dorothybarencott.com/http://www.dorothybarencott.com/2020/6/12/focus-on-fundamentals-what-is-synthesis>

### Example 2: No synthesis

In the following example, the source information is just summarised showing no links between them and thus no synthesis.

Franz (2008) studied undergraduate online students. He looked at 17 females and 18 males and found that none of them liked APA. According to Franz, the evidence suggested that all students are reluctant to learn citations style. Perez (2010) also studies undergraduate students. She looked at 42 females and 50 males and found that males were significantly more inclined to use citation software ( $p < .05$ ). Findings suggest that females might graduate sooner. Goldstein (2012) looked at British undergraduates. Among a sample of 50, all females, all confident in their abilities to cite and were eager to write their dissertations.

Adapted from Simple Psychology: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/synthesising.html>

### Example 2: Synthesis

In the following example, synthesis is achieved using words such as "although" and "despite" to show the relationship between the sources used.

Studies of undergraduate students reveal conflicting conclusions regarding relationships between advanced scholarly study and citation efficacy. Although Franz (2008) found that no participants enjoyed learning citation style, Goldstein (2012) determined in a larger study that all participants watched felt comfortable citing sources, suggesting that variables among participant and control group populations must be examined more closely. Despite Perez (2010) expanding on Franz's original study with a larger, a more diverse sample...

Adapted from Simple Psychology: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/synthesising.html>

**Language to compare, contrast and synthesis**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of</li> <li>• Numerous</li> <li>• Several</li> <li>• Some</li> <li>• A few</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>studies</li> <li>authors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>found</li> <li>demonstrated</li> <li>examined</li> <li>questioned</li> <li>suggest</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite x, the</li> <li>• However the</li> <li>• In contrast the</li> <li>• Similarly</li> <li>• Furthermore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>author(s) ('s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>found</li> <li>perspective / view is</li> <li>argument is</li> <li>findings are</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The literature</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Findings</li> <li>• Recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is/are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consistent / inconsistent</li> <li>clear / unclear</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author takes a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>similar</li> <li>different</li> <li>complimentary</li> <li>contrasting</li> <li>conflicting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>view / perspective</li> <li>argument</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author expanded on these studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>suggesting</li> <li>illustrating</li> <li>supporting</li> <li>questioning</li> <li>rejecting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the notion</li> <li>the recommendation</li> <li>the findings</li> <li>the assumption</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relationship between A and B was</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further</li> <li>also</li> <li>equally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supported by author</li> <li>questioned by author</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continued</li> <li>little</li> <li>some</li> <li>strong</li> <li>little</li> <li>significant</li> <li>conclusive /inconclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>debate</li> <li>agreement</li> <li>disagreement</li> <li>controversy</li> <li>evidence</li> </ul>