**Synthesizing Information for an Academic Assignment**

In academic writing, synthesizing means to intentionally make connections between or among sources in relation to a research question (Williams, 2013). These connections are then related to the writer’s ideas about a topic.

Reading, paraphrasing, summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing skills are all brought together in the writing of assignments that incorporate outside sources. These assignments represent first steps in researching, and they eventually may lead to the writing of reports, essays, and dissertations. Such assignments can also be considered “formalized brainstorming” in that they help a writer create or respond to a research question by investigating ideas from a few outside sources. These outside sources can then assist a writer in finding even more relevant sources and in refining his or her research question and the response to it.

Williams, J. (2013). How to write an explanatory synthesis essay. *LEAP advanced: reading and writing* (pp. 208-211). Montreal: Pearson.

**Sample Synthesis Mapped into the Format Chart**

Research Question: Does Chavo have the characteristics necessary to be a good online collaborative forum leader?

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| **Part of Synthesis** | **Description of Part** |
| Introduction (Paragraph One)   * Background information (beginning with a general statement to orient your readers) * Question * Thesis | Virtual communities are more and more prevalent on the Internet these days. Rheingold (as cited in Williams, 2013) has suggested that not all communities are successful, and the leadership skills of the host have a great impact on how well these communities operate. He presents a number of characteristics he feels are essential, and this synthesis will analyze Chavo, the leader of the online forum Interpol and answer the question, “Is Chavo a good online collaborative forum leader?” Two characteristics, that leaders provide relevant information to community members and that they not assert authority, will be examined. |
| Body (Paragraph Two)   * Topic sentence * Analysis and synthesis of sources in relation to two characteristics selected   First characteristic: provide information that is relevant  Second characteristic: lead without asserting authority | * (beginning with “In his advice to virtual community leaders,…” * 1. (beginning at “He suggests that ideal hosts…“O’Hear and Sefton-Green (2004) write about Chavo…”)   2. “Another characteristic…”Chavo in O’hear and Sefton-Green (2004)…” |
| Conclusion (Paragraph Three)   * Brief summary statement * Answer to the question * Final thought/ warning/ prediction | In conclusion, online forums have become a common medium for communicating and collaborating. Rheingold offers a number of recommendations for the leaders of such communities, and Chavo, the leader of the successful virtual community, Interpol, provides members with information relevant to his members; however, contrary to Rheingold’s recommendation, Chavo also assert his leadership authority. It seems that while Rheingold’s characteristics of an ideal host apply in certain contexts, there may be instances where community members expect their leaders to be authoritative. As for new virtual community leaders, Rheingold’s recommendations are worth considering, but these guidelines should not be followed exactly. Every community is unique and every leader must recognize and assess the needs of his or her community members. |