

Synthesizing sources

Objectives:

By the end of this tutorial, you will be better able to:

- write a synthesis of several sources for a specific purpose and
- engage a range of language strategies to express your stance clearly and convincingly.



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Task:

- Go to the following link:
<http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m2/m2u4/default.htm>
- Read Module 2, Units 4 and 5 on Reporting Evidence and Referencing.

1. Synthesizing Ideas

Synthesizing involves combining ideas in several texts into one, reorganizing them, and rephrasing them to serve a specific purpose. It is a very difficult craft and many PhD students struggle to do this well. The skill involves organising the sources and marshalling them for your own purpose. You are the director of the orchestra and the sources are the instruments that you are using to make your point. What makes a literature review excellent is the ability of the writer not only to correctly report the sources but more importantly to make them talk to each other to support his/her own line of argumentation.

2. Steps for effective synthesizing of ideas:

- a) Identify texts that are relevant to your purpose.
- b) Identify the relevant ideas in the texts.
- c) Make sure you identify the meaning relationships between ideas. Ask yourself: do the ideas contradict, support, exemplify, extend or bring an element of doubt? Do the ideas support your stance or contradict it? Pay special attention to the language of appraisal/evaluation which you have learned about in earlier lessons.
- d) Organize the information you have. Group similar ideas together.
- e) Decide on how you want to express the relations between these groups of ideas. Also, use appropriate expressions (e.g. reporting verbs, evaluative words) to reflect your stance regarding these ideas.
- f) Paraphrase and Summarize as necessary.
- g) Check your notes with your original texts for accuracy and relevance. Make sure that your writing does not deviate from the intended meaning given in the original text.
- h) Use link words and transitional phrases so that the ideas “flow” smoothly.
- i) Check your work.
 - Make sure your main ideas are clearly presented
 - Make sure the language is correct
 - Make sure the style is your own
 - Remember to acknowledge other people's work

Adapted from Using English for Academic Purposes:

<http://www.uefap.net/writing/writing-reporting/writing-reporting-synthesis>

Practice

Task :

Integrate the two following sources to provide an overview of the drugs in school situation in Australia. Consider the following questions:

- Are both sources on the same topic?
- Do they both express the same view?

Write a 1-2 sentence synthesis of the two to show how their meanings relate.

Source 1:	Source 2
We have turned the tide on drug use. McCaffrey, B. (1988)	From 1997 to 1998 high school seniors ... increased use of powder cocaine, opiates, steroids, barbiturates, tranquilizers, and hallucinogens. Institute for Social Research (1998)
Your synthesis:	

From: http://writessite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m2/m2u3/m2u3s6/m2u3s6_2.htm

Task - Write a 50 word paragraph explaining what is meant by "culture shock."

- In small groups, discuss and select the texts you will use.
- Follow the 10 steps presented above.
- Write your 50 word explanation for the concept 'culture shock'.
- Be sure to acknowledge the author's for their ideas.

1. Culture shock refers to phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis.

(From H. Douglas Brown, *Principles of language learning and teaching*, 1980, page 131, Published by Prentice-Hall in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.)

2. Culture...taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as members of society.

(From: Tyler, Edward B. *Primitive culture*. Published in London by J. Murray in 1871. The quotation is from page 1.)

3. Cultures have to have something to mould. What they in fact have is an exceedingly complex arrangement of biochemical machinery, each piece containing certain instructions of a highly specific kind about its own development. Culture, too, provides a set of instructions about development. Man is thus subject to two sets of instructions, a cultural set and an organic set, both of which are with him from conception to death. The organic set is in the ascendancy before birth; after birth the cultural set becomes steadily more potent, until eventually, towards death, the organic set regains ascendancy.

(From: *The biology of human action*. By Vernon Reynolds, page 73.
Published in Reading, UK, by W H Freeman in 1976.)

4. The future evolutionary and ecological success of the species in the face of an ever-accelerating rate of environmental change, associated with growing urbanisation and industrialisation, will depend entirely on the extent to which cultural adaptation continues to be effective. The success of cultural adaptation, in turn, will depend on the level of understanding in society of the increasingly complex interactions between natural processes on the one hand and cultural processes on the other.

(From a book by S V Boyden, page 436. *The impact of civilisation on the biology of man*. Australian National University, Canberra, 1970.)

5. Culture is man's medium; there is no one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion), the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how their cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organised, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function.

(From pages 16 to 17 of a book by Hall, Edward. T. It was published in 1976 in New York by Doubleday and the title is *Beyond culture*)

6. Culture shock is what happens when a traveller suddenly finds himself in a place where 'yes' may mean 'no', where 'fixed price' is negotiable, where to be kept waiting in an outer office is no cause for insult, where laughter may signify anger.

(From Alvin Toffler's book: *Future shock*. Published in New York by Bantam Books in 1970. Page 3.)

7. A culture is the totally socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of society. (Harris, 1975, p. 144).

(From a book by Melvyn Harris, published in 1975. The title of the book is *Culture, people, nature: An introduction to general anthropology*. It was published in New York by Harper and Row.)

8. A culture bump occurs when an individual from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture. This phenomenon results from a difference in the way people from one culture behave in a particular situation from people in another culture.

(From pages 170 to 171 of an article by Carol M Archer called "Culture bump and beyond". This article is on pages 170 to 178 of a collection of articles in a book called *Culture bound*. The book is edited by Joyce M Valdes and was published in 1986 in Cambridge by Cambridge University Press.)

9. According to Peter Adler:

Culture shock, then, is thought to be a form of anxiety that results from the loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse. The individual undergoing culture shock reflects his anxiety and nervousness with cultural differences through any number of defence mechanisms: repression, regression, isolation and rejection. These defensive attitudes speak, in behavioural terms, of a basic underlying insecurity which may encompass loneliness, anger, frustration and self-questioning of competence. With the familiar props, cues, and clues of cultural understanding removed, the individual becomes disoriented, afraid of, and alienated from the things that he knows and understands.

(From an article called "Culture shock and the cross-cultural learning experience". It was published in 1972 on page 8. The article was on pages 3 to 48 of the journal: *Readings in Intercultural education, volume 2*.)

10. According to George Foster in 1962, page 87:

Culture shock is a mental illness, and as is true of much mental illness, the victim does not usually know he is afflicted. He finds that he is irritable, depressed and probably annoyed by the lack of attention shown him.

(From the book: *Traditional cultures*, published in New York by Harper and Row.)

11. It is homesickness and more. First encounters with another culture can be shock. You do not have to visit another country to experience culture shock. As any who has kept a diary through important changes in life, such as a new job or going to college, we often go through changes of mood and attitude before coming to terms with the new situation.

(From a booklet produced by the British Council called *Feeling at home*. It was published in London in 1997 and the quotation is from page 10.)

Your paragraph:

Retrieved from Using English for Academic Purposes, <http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

Task :

Read the texts below and write 200-250 word paragraph discussing the problems for the human race with regard to water. Follow the 10 steps that have been mentioned above. Be sure to acknowledge the author's for their ideas.

1. Water H₂O

The commonest molecular compound on Earth; a liquid, freezing to ice at 0°C and boiling to steam at 100°C. It covers about 75% of the Earth's surface, and dissolves almost everything to some extent. It is essential to life, and occurs in all living organisms. It is strongly hydrogen-bonded in the liquid phase, and co-ordinates to dissolved ions. Unusually, the solid is less dense than the liquid; this results in ice floating on ponds, and accounts for the destructiveness of continued freezing and thawing. Water containing substantial concentrations of calcium and magnesium ions is called 'hard', and is 'softened' by replacing these ions with sodium or potassium, which do not form insoluble products with soaps.

From: *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia* by David Crystal. It was published in Cambridge by Cambridge University Press in 1990 and the extract is from page 1285.)

2. Crisis and Challenge

Today in almost every area of the world one chooses to look at there is a water problem - scarcity, depletion, pollution, lack of sanitation, failing rains due to global warming, big dam projects blocking up rivers, privatisation,

inequities of distribution, cross-border conflict, profligate use and mismanagement. Take your pick. But let's start with overuse.

We learn at school that freshwater on earth follows a cycle: it is constantly being replenished, some of it soaking into the ground and into vegetation, some of it meandering through streams and rivers on its way back to the sea. But at what stage of our lives do we forget this important lesson? The moment one starts using freshwater beyond the rate at which it can be replenished, the hydrological cycle is endangered.

The crisis is particularly acute in relation to our groundwater reserves, lying deep under the surface in aquifers, upon which a third of the world's population depends. Water can take thousands of years to percolate into aquifers (some contain water from the last ice age). Some have since sealed up, allowing little possibility of recharge. Because the reserves of water they hold are large, humans have been tapping them like there is no tomorrow. Currently we are pumping out about 200 billion cubic metres (1 cubic metre = 908 litres) more than can be recharged, steadily using up our water capital.

Take California with its manicured lawns and 560,000 swimming pools. Having taxed the Colorado River to the limit, the region's aquifers are being guzzled up. By 2020 officials predict a water shortfall nearly equivalent to what the state is currently using. Another more distant water source needs to be found to gulp down. Consumption is the operative word for US water use.

(From an article by Dinar Godrej called "Precious fluid". It was published the *New Internationalist* magazine, volume 354. It was published in, March 2003 on pages 9-12. This extract is from page 10.)

3. The Ocean

Approximately three fourths of This Earth of Ours is covered by the ocean, which modifies its climate, receives its sediments, and determines the configuration of its shores. It has been estimated that the average depth of the ocean is about 2½ miles and the average height of the continents about ½ mile, so that if all of the land were cut off at sea level and placed in the ocean basins, it would fill only one fortieth of the depression. The term average depth does not give a true picture of the ocean floor, which contains islands that rise 3 or 4 miles above a general level and depressions or deeps that descend about an equal distance. Off the coast of the Philippine Islands is the greatest known depression 35,433 feet deep and the Tuscarora Deep near Japan exceeds 28,000 feet. In the Atlantic soundings over 27,000 feet have been recorded near Puerto Rico. The great deeps of the ocean are of approximately the same magnitude as the highest elevations on land, for Mt.

Everest, the highest measured mountain, exceeds 29,000 feet.

(By Doctor Victor T. Allen, MS, PhD. This is from an old book called *This earth of ours*. It was published in 1939 in Milwaukee by The Bruce Publishing Company. This section is from page 160.)

4. Some Facts About Water

- On our blue planet 97.5% of the water is saltwater, unfit for human use.
- The majority of freshwater is beyond our reach, locked into polar snow and ice.
- Less than 1% of freshwater is usable, amounting to only 0.01% of the Earth's total water.
- Even this would be enough to support the world's population three times over if used with care.
- However, water - like population - isn't distributed evenly. Asia has the greatest annual availability of fresh-water and Australia the lowest. But when population is taken into account the picture looks very different.
- Our increasing thirst is a result of growing population, industrial development and the expansion of irrigated farming. In the past 40 years, the area of irrigated land has doubled.'
- By the mid-1990s, 80 countries home to 40% of world population encountered serious 'water shortages. Worst affected are Africa and the Middle East.
- By 2025 two-thirds of the world's people will be facing water stress. The global demand for water will have grown by - over 40% by then.
- The only ray of hope is that the growth in actual use of water has been slower than predicted.
- Dirty water is the cause of numerous diseases, but improving hygiene and sanitation are equally important in order to curb water-related diseases.

(From an article in *New Internationalist* called Water: The facts. It was on page 18 of the March 2003 issue. This was volume 354.)

5. Water Pollution

Water pollution affects oceans, streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, and groundwater, and can be caused by natural impurities or human activities that pollute the nearby water or water supplies.

Natural impurities in water are sometimes, but not always, pollutants. They are divided into three categories of particles: suspended particles that absorb light and make water cloudy, such as beach sand, coal dust, and bacteria;

colloidal particles, such as soot and some viruses, which cannot be removed from water by ordinary filtration and cause the water to look cloudy when observed at right angles to a beam of light; and dissolved matter, which are the 'smallest impurities in water, including molecules and ions of various substances, such as chloride or sodium ions or carbon dioxide molecules.

Human activities are often the cause of localized water pollution, as water becomes contaminated with heavy metals, toxic chemicals, and bacteria. Rivers may experience oil and chemical spills, untreated sewage runoff from homes and industry, and nonpoint source pollution, such as contaminated runoff from highways, parking lots, and agricultural fields. Groundwater (or subsurface water) may be contaminated by the infiltration of pollutants from landfills and septic tanks, or by percolation of water containing contaminated runoff. Parts of the ocean are sometimes polluted by oil tanker spills and garbage dumping.

(This was written by Patricia Barnes-Svarney, in "*The New York public library science desk reference*". It was published in New York by Macmillan in 1996 and this paragraph is from page 472.)

6. Water Scarcity

Some 1.2 billion people lack access to clean water, twice that number have no sanitation, and most of the world will not have enough water within 30 years. This combination of scarcity and bad management affects food supplies, health, education, nature and economic development. It means women spend long periods collecting it, families spend up to half their daily income on it, farmers lose their land, and infants die.

Global consumption of freshwater is doubling every 20 years and new sources are becoming scarcer and more expensive to develop and treat.

In 1996, says the UN, humanity used about 54% of all the accessible freshwater contained in rivers, lakes and underground aquifers. This is conservatively projected to climb to at least 70% by 2025, reflecting population growth alone, and by much more if per capita consumption rises at its current pace.

Some 70% of all the world's fresh water used by man goes to grow food, and in parts of the US, North Africa and Asia, farmers can take up to 95%. Unavoidable population increases in the next 20 years will mean that agriculture alone will need at least 17% more water than it does now just to grow the extra food these people will need.

(Blue gold: Earth's liquid asset, John Vidal, *The Guardian*, August 2002, p. 6.)

Your Answer:

Task:

Your tutor will provide a model answer for the above task.

- Study this as a model for the synthesis practice you will be given on this semester's theme: *A free higher education*.
- Find and highlight the following:

In-text citations:

- Author prominent (when the author is outside the brackets)
- Information prominent (when the author is at the end of the sentence, in brackets)

Endorsing or distancing language strategies:

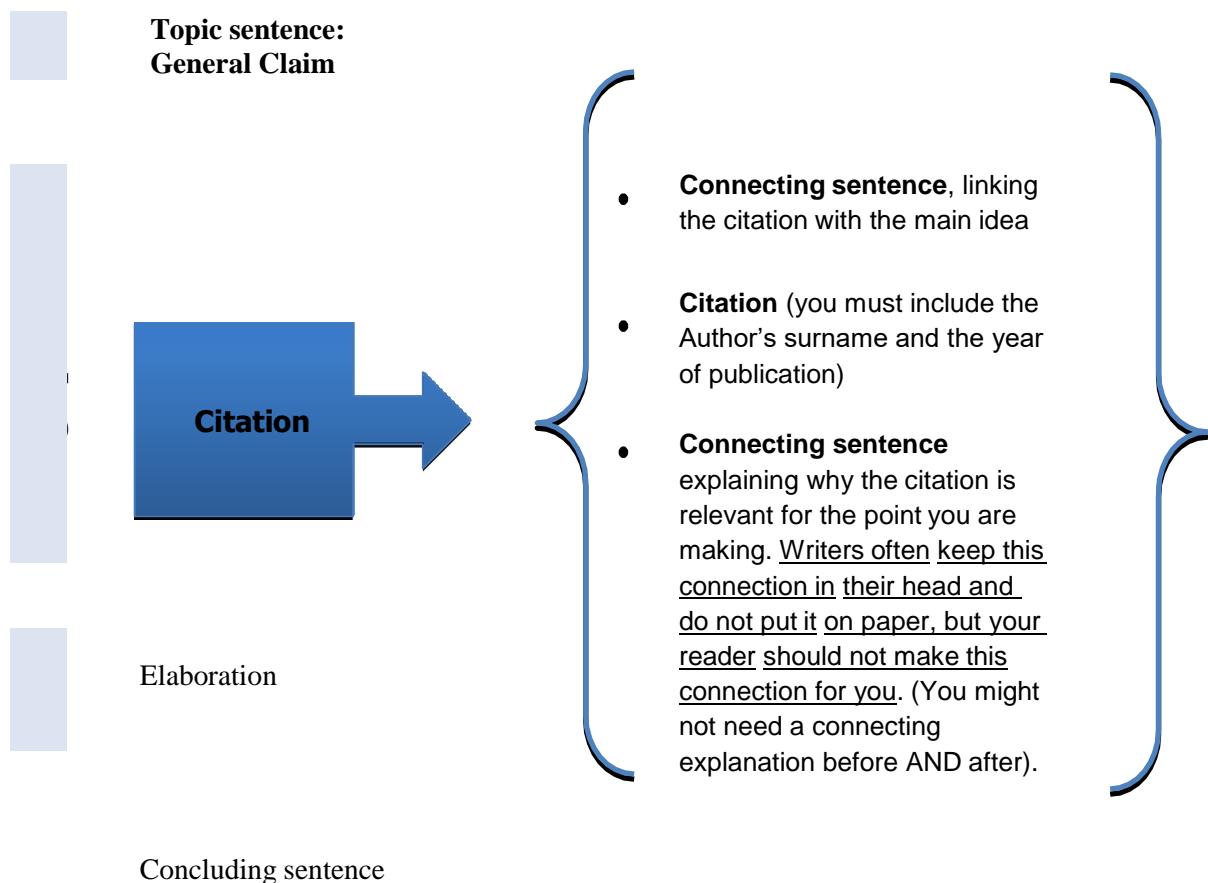
See handout Summarizing, paraphrasing and Stance. The Endorsing and distancing strategies are:

- Evaluative/reporting verbs: what meaning do they contribute? Do they show certainty or tentativeness? Do they show the writer endorses (agrees with) or takes some distance (expresses some degree of doubt) from the authors?
 - intensifiers and limiters(clearly, unambiguously, to a certain extent...)
 - modality
 - concessive conjunctions(although, while...)
 - passive verbs
-
- Highlight the linking words that help signpost the progression of the text from one idea to the next.

3. Building a source-based paragraph:

A paragraph follows a fairly typical structure. The '**topic sentence**' contains the claim/main idea/most general information. The following sentences **develop, support, and provide evidence**.

In academic texts, this support/evidence comes from reliable sources which you have to cite. Your citation must be well integrated into your paragraph. The following 'formula' can help you integrate citations logically into your paragraphs. After you become a more competent academic writer, you may not be required to follow such 'strict' guidelines, but you will **always** connect your citation(s) to your main idea (your topic sentence) to explain to your reader why the citation is relevant.



Task : In the paragraph below, highlight the citation; identify the topic sentence, the elaboration and the 'connecting sentence'.

<p>[A] A good field biologist has to have excellent ability to work in harsh conditions (<i>topic sentence</i>). [B] Depending on the ecosystem you are studying, work location might range from deserts to misty mountains, and might expose you to a variety of inclement weather. [C] According to Brenner (2000), a field biologist has to be able to adapt to conditions that lack basic comfort in terms of accommodation or food while retaining their ability to conduct their work effectively. [D] Indeed, field work always involves outdoor living, so skills in camping and hiking, basic survival knowledge such as first aid and dealing with wild animals are invaluable advantages. [E] The ability to enjoy a simple life style, and forgo the many conveniences our modern societies give us access to is also crucial. [F] When on a field assignment in a remote area, aspects of modern living such as internet connection, shopping and restaurants are unlikely to be available [G] It is therefore essential for an aspiring field biologist to gage whether they have the required skills in order to prepare themselves for this exciting, but challenging career.</p>	<p><u>A.</u> topic sentence <u>B.</u> elaboration <u>C.</u> citation <u>D.</u> connecting sentence that expands on brenner citation by examples <u>E and F.</u> elaboration: further examples of what amounts for lack of basic comfort <u>G.</u> concluding sentence</p>
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*Note the **lexical chain** starting in the topic sentence and continuing in the quote and the following sentences: *harsh conditions>inclement weather>lack basic comfort>forgo the many conveniences>unlikely to be available>challenging*

That is to say, this means that, therefore, this shows that, this clearly demonstrates that, this supports the view that, this is a significant example of....are expressions which can help you write your connecting sentences.

4. Citations must be ‘grammatically well integrated’.

Task : Choose the best options to make the following author prominent citations grammatically correct. Explain why the other options are incorrect.

1. For example, Carry, Barnett and Cobbs (2012)
 - a) explains that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.'
 - b) they explain that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.'
 - c) explain that when there is massive loss of zooxanthellae in a hard coral colony, the polyps become colourless and the underlying white skeleton shows through, making patches of the colony appear pale, white or 'bleached.'
2. According to Mendez (2002),
 - a) he noted that “the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input” (p.23).
 - b) “the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input” (p.23).
 - c) the fact that "the Happy Planet Index is an efficiency measure that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input"(p.23).
3. As Liu (1998)
 - a) maintains that coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.
 - b) she maintains that that coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.
 - c) maintains, coastal marine life is strongly affected by environment and pollution issues.

Preparation for next week:

Work on the Synthesis task on *A free higher education* and come to class with the first draft in Week 4 tutorial 1. Run a plagiarism check (when you submit in the IVLE Synthesis submission folder) and analyse the report carefully. Ask for clarifications if anything is highlighted as ‘plagiarized’.