



## Tools to Help Students Improve Papers and Reduce Your Grading Time

This newsletter includes 3 tools to help students improve their papers and to hopefully reduce the time you will spend grading papers: Paragraph structure, Synthesis, and Wordiness

### Paragraph Structure

[Students may recognize this template as **Claim-Evidence-Commentary** or **CEC**]

This tool is only one of many that can guide students in creating well-developed paragraphs. Feel free to use it, adapt it, or ignore it for your own use:

- Begin the paragraph with your claim (the single main idea of the paragraph)
- Add evidence to support your claim
- Insert your analysis of the evidence as it relates to your paper's main claim
- Add evidence to support your claim and to support or refute the earlier evidence in the paragraph
- End with your analysis of the evidence as it relates to your paper's main claim

### Synthesis

Synthesizing Information is a demanding reading/writing task commonly assigned in academic settings, combining information from two or more texts (Hirvela, 2004, as cited in Grabe & Zhang, 2013). Synthesis may result in "a comparison of information or ideas from multiple texts," solutions to address a problem, identification of multiple aspects of an issue, or the formation of a new claim. Synthesis is essential to academic writing, but it is extremely difficult to master (Grabe & Zhang, 2013).

"Synthesis is the process of analyzing and evaluating information from various sources, making connections between the information found, and combining the recently acquired information with prior knowledge to create something new" (Lundstrom et al., 2015, p. 61).

Unfortunately, "college students have difficulty analyzing and synthesizing different pieces of information" (Howard et al., 2010, as cited in Lundstrom et al., 2015, p. 61). "The literature on information seeking behavior shows that students have superficial information seeking and research skills" and may not be able to "successfully synthesize information from multiple sources" unless they are taught explicitly (Lundstrom et al., 2015, pp. 61-62).

Learning to organize key ideas from multiple sources is an important step, but students need to be taught how to use the key ideas from multiple sources to create a new claim: "First, researchers have noted that students often write about multiple sources by drafting separate, sequential summaries of scholarly articles but generally fail to integrate information across them. Second, students struggle to identify relevant information from source articles and to organize it into a coherent narrative" (Darowski et al., 2022, p. 57).

## Wordiness

Consider posting some suggestions for helping students reduce or eliminate wordiness:

**Remove Unnecessary Words** -- Sentences should be concise and direct; eliminate the obvious.

- *Example: I enjoy power walking at* a quick pace in the **nighttime** twilight under the dark sky.
- *Becomes:* I power walk at night.

**Remove Redundant Words** Some common pairs of words are redundant; remove one word from each pair.

• first and foremost	• ancient history	• final outcome	• terrible tragedy
• each and every	• future plans	• hopes and desires	• reflect back
• any and all	• free gift		

**Remove Adverbs and Qualifiers** -- *so, very, many, quite, really, and definitely* are typically unnecessary.

- *Examples:* A number of very qualified research colleagues studied really unprepared students as they reflected back on the professors' many comments on their papers.
- *Becomes:* Researchers studied students' reactions to professor comments on their papers.

### Be Concise and Eliminate Wordiness

Eliminate phrases using be-verbs or there + be-verb. (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been, there is/are)

Example:

- *Wordy:* There were four students who were participating in the research study.
- *Concise:* Four students participated in the research study.

I have attached a copy of the synthesis assignment I use in the Psychology Introduction to Writing course. Again, use it in any form that is helpful for you!

## References

Darowski, E. S., Helder, E. & Patson, N. D. 2022. Explicit writing instruction in synthesis: Combining in-class discussion and an online tutorial.

*Teaching of Psychology* 49(1), 57–63. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0098628320979899>

Grabe, W., & Zhang, C. (2013). Reading and writing together: A critical component of English for academic purposes teaching and learning. *Tesol*

*Journal*. Wiley Online Library. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.65>

Kansas University Academic Support Center (<https://writing.ku.edu/conciseness-and-eliminating-wordiness>)

Lanham, R. A. (1992). *Revising Prose*. Macmillan, 1992.

Lundstrom, K., Diekema, A. R., Leary, H., Haderlie, S., & Holliday, W. (2015). Teaching and learning information synthesis: An intervention and

rubric based assessment. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 9(1), 60-82. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2015.9.1.176>

## FHSS Writing Lab

1175 JFSB

<https://fhsswriting.byu.edu/Pages/Home.aspx>

[fhss-writinglab@byu.edu](mailto:fhss-writinglab@byu.edu)

**Faculty Supervisor:** Joyce Adams (422-8168)

**Student Lab Manager:** Brooke (422-4454)

## Using the Words of Scholars as Evidence -- Synthesizing Psychology Articles

This step-by-step assignment can help us move from the skill of summarizing to thinking critically about a scientific article and to synthesizing the information from scholarly articles and using them to support our own ideas.

A Paragraph Quoted from Article #1	A Paragraph Quoted from Article #2
<p><b>Locate a scholarly journal article that is relevant to your literature review. Copy &amp; paste a well-developed paragraph and include the complete reference (the reference must be in APA format).</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <p style="color: red;">“Most contractures in arthrogyrosis require treatment; this potentially involves multiple surgical corrections of the knees and hips, correction of spinal deformities, elbow and wrist contractures, foot deformities, and of dislocations commonly accompanying the contractures; of these, the hip and knee are the most commonly affected joints. The treatment of a child, and subsequently an adult, with arthrogyrosis is a challenge – not only due to the nature of the disease and the resulting surgical technical difficulties, but also due to the required logistics of the complex multi-disciplinary treatment; this involves, among others, pediatricians, physiotherapists, geneticists, orthopedic surgeons, and orthotic specialists – all of whom need thorough knowledge and experience in the treatment of arthrogyrosis patients.”</p> <p>Kowalczyk, B., Choland, R., &amp; Feluś, J. (2023). Arthrogyrosis: An update on clinical aspects, etiology, and treatment strategies. <i>Archives of Medical Science</i>, 12(1), 10-24. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5114/aoms.2016.57578">https://doi.org/10.5114/aoms.2016.57578</a></p> <p><b>Your Paragraph &amp; Reference entry:</b></p>	<p><b>Locate a second relevant scholarly journal article. Copy &amp; paste a well-developed quotation with complete reference in APA format:</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <p style="color: blue;">“Animation can be used as an art form in an integrative approach of art therapy, and it includes a case study drawn from the author’s own extensive work with animation in therapy. Art Therapy helps individuals to externalize various psychological problems through creative art activities chosen to support a range of therapeutic methods. In recent years, art therapy has used drawing, music, writing, sound, movement and a variety of other art forms, acknowledging the intimate connection between numerous integrated theories of the arts and the promotion of growth and healing. Animation, which focuses on drawn movement, is a unique art form; its production process incorporates many different art forms and media in a multimodal manner. In addition, using animation as a therapeutic approach could provide better access to children and adolescents, who generally understand and enjoy animation, and are familiar with the digital media environment. As this research is still at an early stage, many challenges remain. However, the case study below demonstrates that animation therapy has great potential as a new approach to integrative arts therapy; offered in a supportive setting, it can intensify healing and transformation.”</p> <p style="color: blue;">Choo, H. (2023). A new approach to art therapy using animation: Animation therapy. <i>Journal of Arts and Imaging Science</i>, 2(3), 10-14. <a href="https://doi.org/10.15323/techart.2015.08.2.3.10">https://doi.org/10.15323/techart.2015.08.2.3.10</a></p> <p><b>Your Paragraph &amp; Reference entry:</b></p>

### Summarize

Capture the main points and/or implications

<p><b>Simply create a bulleted list of the main points of the paragraph from Article #1.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test is on adults with chronic low back pain</li> <li>• Usual care = less effective than MBSR &amp; CBT</li> <li>• No significant differences between MBSR &amp; CBT</li> <li>• XXXXXXXX</li> </ul> <p><b>Now you do the same with the paragraph that is relevant to your topic.</b></p>	<p><b>Create a bulleted list of the main points of the paragraph from Article #2.</b></p> <p><b>Example:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only between group differences were between CBT and usual care</li> <li>• Benefits of usual care diminutions some after 1 year</li> <li>• XXXXXXXXXXXX</li> </ul> <p><b>Now you do the same with the paragraph that is relevant to your topic.</b></p>
---	--

## Analyze

How does this topic connect to your research?

Now, analyze how this paragraph is relevant to your research. Be specific.

Now, analyze how this paragraph is relevant to your research. Be specific.

## Synthesize Information From the Two Paragraphs

Children with arthrogryposis usually require extensive treatment, but therapy may be insufficient to help with mental and emotional health. Children with arthrogryposis may have a combination of specialists working to help correct physical deformities, including “pediatricians, physiotherapists, geneticists, orthopedic surgeons, and orthotic specialists” (Kowalczyk et al., 2023, p. 10). Although the intervention in a child’s behalf to improve their physical well-being is important, their psychological well-being may be neglected. One means of facilitating positive results is to assess the child’s personal interests to include creative therapy in his or her rehabilitation. For example, “Art therapy has used drawing, music, writing, sound, movement and a variety of other art forms” to promote “growth and healing” (Choo, 2023, p. 10). One type of art therapy has been explored recently: computer animation. Using computer animation as a therapeutic approach for children and adolescents can enhance children’s creativity and well-being (p. 10). Children with arthrogryposis may benefit from using computer animation to facilitate their mental and emotional health.

## Analysis of Good Synthesis Above

- Note that the above synthesized paragraph is in Claim-Evidence-Commentary format.
- Avoid beginning or ending paragraphs with citations.
- Also note that the second article has a direct quotation, as well as a summary; both require citations.

## Your Synthesis

Create a new paragraph relevant to your research that synthesizes the 2 scholarly sources. **Include correct APA format citations.** Use the CEC formula for the paragraph. This should be a well-crafted paragraph that you could use in your literature review.