

# Developing Skills for Synthesizing and Integrating Sources

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## How can you develop strong skills for synthesizing and integrating?

You use the skills of synthesizing and integrating when you are asked to read several selections and then write an essay about what you read. The following steps will help you understand the process of how to do this.

**Step 1:** Analyze the sources of information.

**Step 2:** Identify the relationships between ideas in the sources.

**Step 3:** Decide on a main idea that brings together a common idea from all the sources.

**Step 4:** When synthesizing multiple sources of information into your writing, use a standard format for citation.

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### **Step 1:** Analyze the sources of information.

You have just read many different selections on the theme of survival. Suppose you want to explain what you have learned about the topic of survival. First, you must analyze the selections to discover the important ideas of each one.

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**Directions:** Use the following chart to identify selections and important ideas from *On the Edge of Survival*.

Selection(s)	Important Idea

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection(s)	Important Idea
Search and Rescue	Going into the wilderness is a way of taking back control of our lives. In the wilderness, we believe we have control over whether we live or die.
Contents of a Dead Man's Pockets	A near-death experience causes a young man to reevaluate his priorities.
Plainswoman	When faced with the dangers of the frontier, a woman rises to the challenge and becomes stronger and more independent.

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**Step 2:** Identify the relationships between ideas in the sources.

Once you've identified the important ideas, you need to bring them back together into one central idea. In this book, all the selections are focused on a similar theme, so you should decide what each story says about the concept of survival. Some good questions to ask are

- Which ideas are similar?
- Which ideas do I believe are most important?
- Which ideas speak the most to me personally?
- How do these ideas fit together?

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**Directions:** Revisit the selections and their important ideas you identified on previous screens.

Selection(s)	Important Idea	Idea Related to Survival

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Selection(s)	Important Idea	Idea Related to Survival

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection(s)	Important Idea	Idea Related to Survival
Search and Rescue	Going into the wilderness is a way of taking back control of our lives. In the wilderness, we believe we have control over whether we live or die.	Modern people purposely try to survive in the wilderness to feel in control and to truly feel alive.



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Your responses may look like this.

Selection(s)	Important Idea	Idea Related to Survival
Contents of a Dead Man's Pockets	A near-death experience causes a young man to reevaluate his priorities.	When people almost die, they realize what is important in life.

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Your responses may look like this.

Selection(s)	Important Idea	Idea Related to Survival
Plainswoman	When faced with the dangers of the frontier, a woman rises to the challenge and becomes stronger and more independent.	People who live on the edge of survival become strong or they don't make it.

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**Step 3:** Decide on a main idea that brings together a common idea from all the sources.

Remember, synthesizing and integrating are taking information and ideas and combining them into a new whole. By writing a main idea based upon the ideas you gathered from several selections in the book, you will be creating a new statement. Be sure that your main idea encompasses ideas from three or more selections. If you are writing an essay, your main idea may also become your thesis statement.

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**Directions:** Synthesize the information gathered from the selections into a main idea statement.

Ideas Related to Survival		
Modern people purposely try to survive in the wilderness to feel in control and to feel alive.	When people almost die, they realize what is important in life.	People who live on the edge of survival become strong or they don't make it.

Main Idea Statement:

People who almost die find that they understand how to truly live.

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When writing an essay about literature, you should refer to works of literature accurately and appropriately. The following screens provide examples of how to integrate works of literature into your writing by using

- short direct quotations
- long direct quotations
- paraphrases of literature

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The following excerpt is from “Search and Rescue” by Tim Cahill on page 26.

We live in a world in which nothing happens that is not our own fault. . . . We have all become victims.

Which, I think, is why some of us venture into the wilderness. We do so because it's not safe, and there's no one to blame but ourselves. You can get hurt out there, which is precisely the point. Wilderness is a way of taking back control of our lives (Cahill 26).

The screens following the excerpt will demonstrate how to integrate the information into an essay.

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**Short Direct Quotations:** These are word-for-word quotations that are four lines or shorter. To tell your reader exactly where the direct quotation begins and ends, use quotation marks before and after the passage. Identify the source in parentheses by listing the author's last name and the page number. If you mention the author in the text, list only the page number.

In “Search and Rescue,” Tim Cahill offers his own view of why modern people feel the need to venture into the wilderness. “You can get hurt out there, which is precisely the point. Wilderness is a way of taking back control of our lives” (26).

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**Long Direct Quotations:** If a direct quotation is four lines or longer, set it off as a block quotation. It should be indented one inch from the left margin, double-spaced, and include a reference to the source. Since the text is set off visually, you do not need to use quotation marks around it. Do include a parenthetical source.



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### Example of Citation of a Long Direct Quotation

“Search and Rescue,” offers one view of why modern people feel the need to venture into the wilderness.

We live in a world in which nothing happens that is not our own fault. . . . We have all become victims. Which, I think, is why some of us venture into the wilderness. We do so because it’s not safe, and there’s no one to blame but ourselves. You can get hurt out there, which is precisely the point. Wilderness is a way of taking back control of our lives. (Cahill 26)

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**Paraphrases:** These are passages written in your own words that express information that you learned from another source. Do not use quotation marks with these but do include a parenthetical citation.

Thomas Cahill, a man who has rescued lucky survivors and retrieved the bodies of the not-so-lucky, believes that modern people venture into the wilderness to take back control of their lives. In the wild they find the power to decide if they live or die (Cahill 26).

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If you used literature from many different sources in your writing, you may be asked to compile a Works Cited page. A Works Cited page should include all the sources used to write your paper, not just the sources directly quoted. Here are some examples of how to list literature used in an essay.

### **A short story in an anthology:**

Cahill, Thomas. "Search and Rescue." *On the Edge of Survival*. Ed. Julie A. Schumacher. Logan, Iowa: Perfection Learning, 2006. Print.

### **A book:**

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York: Levine-Scholastic, 2000. Print.