

The Synthesis Essay (AP English Language and Composition)

An effective synthesis essay “combines the sources with the writer’s opinion to form a cohesive, supported argument—rather than just paraphrasing or quoting the sources (“Scoring Commentary”).

1. Development of Argument

- Captures complexity of issues
- Employs appropriate evidence
- Evaluates significance
- “Converses” with sources

2. Style

- Cites correctly and effectively
- Transitions meaningfully between ideas
- Balances general and specific
- Constructs sentence variety
- Uses rhetorical strategies

Some details to keep in mind:

The sources’ arguments cannot substitute your own.

As you read the prompt and sources, look for patterns—where do sources agree and disagree? What are the areas that people focus on for this topic? How has the issue been evaluated?

The synthesis has the most extended introduction. It establishes context and provides a “map” of the arguments within your essay.

Your audience is well-read, well-informed, and adult. You should still “be yourself” but tailor your style and message to this audience.

Read *and* plan—annotation is planning.

The synthesis essay assesses your ability to...

- **Interpret sources’ claims and strategies (ANALYSIS)**
- **Develop own position (ARGUMENT)**
- **Explain position and cite proof (EXPOSITORY)**
- **Demonstrate stylistic maturity**