

Introducing Synthesis in Your Writing: The OCIE Method

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Synthesis is the combining of elements or parts to form a whole. In everyday life, we employ this skill in a variety of situations by inferring relationships among several pieces of information or experiences. We might overhear a story on the news or radio and pass it along to a friend we feel would benefit, thereby relating the information to their specific experiences. In writing, synthesis is used in a similar way by supporting an idea or argument by showing relationships among a variety of sources.

While there are many ways of employing synthesis in your writing, one method you can use is the *OCIE Method*; or, *Observe, Cite, Interpret, and Evaluate or Exit*.

Observe: Start by writing, in your own words, the purpose or goal of the paragraph. What will this paragraph discuss? What sources will help prove my argument or thesis statement?

Cite: Using verbs of attribution, introduce or cite your first source, either quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. (There is a list of verbs of attribution on page 2 of this handout).

Interpret: Next, construct a sentence that interprets the source and explains its significance to your thesis statement and argument.

Citing another source and using a verb of attribution, describe its significance to your thesis statement.

Evaluate: Finally, construct a sentence evaluating how the two or more sources, combined, “talk to” each other and how they relate to your thesis. Remember, you are showing the relationship between the sources.

Below is a **sample paragraph** which constructs an argument based on the following thesis statement:

Many first-year college writers struggle with source synthesis.

Here is the first paragraph:

First year writers struggle with source synthesis because they have never heard of the OCIE Method. According to Gwen Tetherby, 85% of freshman writers at a university in Nebraska have never heard of this method (73). Thus, most freshmen who went to one major university were never introduced to this methods and this study would affirm that the group was never introduced to the OCIE method. In another study of the same group at the same university, Josh Smith found that the same students had extremely high rates of receiving a ‘C’ or lower in their composition courses (63). Thus, using the same group of students, Smith shows that writers who did not have the OCIE Method taught to them struggled with source synthesis. Therefore, both Tetherby and Smith concur that if students are not shown the OCIE Method, the vast majority struggle with source synthesis.

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Verbs of Attribution:

<i>Accepts</i>	<i>accounts for</i>	<i>acknowledges</i>	<i>addresses</i>	<i>adds</i>	<i>admits</i>
<i>Advises</i>	<i>affirms</i>	<i>agrees</i>	<i>alleges</i>	<i>allows</i>	<i>analyzes</i>
<i>Answers</i>	<i>argues</i>	<i>asks</i>	<i>asserts</i>	<i>assumes</i>	<i>believes</i>
<i>Categorizes</i>	<i>challenges</i>	<i>charges</i>	<i>cites</i>	<i>claims</i>	<i>comments</i>
<i>Compares</i>	<i>complains</i>	<i>concedes</i>	<i>concludes</i>	<i>concurs</i>	<i>confesses</i>
<i>Confirms</i>	<i>considers</i>	<i>contends</i>	<i>contents</i>	<i>criticizes</i>	<i>decides</i>
<i>Declares</i>	<i>defines</i>	<i>denies</i>	<i>describes</i>	<i>disagrees</i>	<i>discusses</i>
<i>Disputes</i>	<i>emphasizes</i>	<i>endorses</i>	<i>exclaims</i>	<i>explains</i>	<i>hypothesizes</i>
<i>Illustrates</i>	<i>implies</i>	<i>indicates</i>	<i>insinuates</i>	<i>insists</i>	<i>interprets</i>
<i>Introduces</i>	<i>lists</i>	<i>maintains</i>	<i>objects</i>	<i>observes</i>	<i>offers</i>
<i>Opposes</i>	<i>points out</i>	<i>proposes</i>	<i>questions</i>	<i>realizes</i>	

How do you know which verb of attribution to use?

- As with so many things in writing, it depends on context.
- In an argumentative essay, try verbs like affirm, argue, confirm, deny, disagree, and verify, where applicable.
- For research essays, try introducing a quotation or paraphrase with verbs like add, reveal, state, mention, or say.
- If you mean to point out that a writer has really accentuated a point, try emphasize. If you are dubious about what the author is writing and plan to disagree, try allege or claim.
- Different verbs are warranted in different contexts, so have as many at your fingertips as possible.