



Using a Synthesis Matrix

What is a Synthesis Matrix?

A synthesis matrix is a valuable tool for organizing and integrating research from multiple sources. It helps you compare and contrast different perspectives, identify themes, and synthesize information to support your writing. Below is an example template for a synthesis matrix that you might use in research writing courses.

Synthesis Matrix Template

Theme/Concept	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4	Source 5
Main Idea 1	- Summary of Source 1's point on Main Idea 1. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 2's point on Main Idea 1. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 3's point on Main Idea 1. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 4's point on Main Idea 1. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 5's point on Main Idea 1. Key quotes/evidence.
Main Idea 2	- Summary of Source 1's point on Main Idea 2. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 2's point on Main Idea 2. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 3's point on Main Idea 2. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 4's point on Main Idea 2. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 5's point on Main Idea 2. Key quotes/evidence.
Main Idea 3	- Summary of Source 1's point on Main Idea 3. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 2's point on Main Idea 3. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 3's point on Main Idea 3. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 4's point on Main Idea 3. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 5's point on Main Idea 3. Key quotes/evidence.
Main Idea 4	- Summary of Source 1's point on Main Idea 4. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 2's point on Main Idea 4. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 3's point on Main Idea 4. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 4's point on Main Idea 4. Key quotes/evidence.	- Summary of Source 5's point on Main Idea 4. Key quotes/evidence.

Instructions for Use

- Identify Themes/Concepts:** Begin by identifying the key themes or concepts that are relevant to your research topic. These will form the rows of your matrix.
- Select Sources:** Choose the sources that you will be synthesizing. These will form the columns of your matrix.
- Extract Information:** For each source, extract relevant information related to each theme or concept. Summarize the main points and include key quotes or pieces of evidence.
- Compare and Contrast:** Use the matrix to compare and contrast the information from different sources. Look for patterns, agreements, and disagreements among the sources.

5. **Synthesize Information:** Use the insights gained from the matrix to write a synthesis in your research paper. The matrix will help you integrate information from multiple sources into a coherent narrative.

Example

Below is an example of a filled-out section of a synthesis matrix for a research paper on the impact of social media on mental health.

Theme/Concept	Source 1 (Smith, 2020)	Source 2 (Jones, 2019)	Source 3 (Brown, 2021)	Source 4 (Lee, 2018)	Source 5 (Green, 2020)
Impact on Anxiety	- Social media increases anxiety due to constant comparison. "Users report feeling anxious when they see posts about others' successes."	- Similar findings: high social media usage linked to higher anxiety levels. Provides statistical data showing correlation.	- Contradicts: Finds no significant link between social media use and anxiety. - "Anxiety levels are influenced more by offline factors."	- Mixed results: impact varies based on individual personality traits. "Introverts more affected than extroverts."	- Supports Smith's findings: Social media use leads to increased anxiety, especially in teenagers. - "Teens are particularly vulnerable to social comparison." - Mixed findings: while some experience depression, others benefit from online communities. "The impact of social media on depression is nuanced and context-dependent."
Impact on Depression	- High usage correlates with increased depression symptoms. "Depression rates are higher among heavy social media users."	- Depression linked to cyberbullying on social media. "Victims of cyberbullying show higher rates of depression."	- Agrees with Smith: Strong link between social media and depression. Provides longitudinal data supporting the correlation.	- Disagrees: Finds social media can have positive effects by providing social support. "Positive interactions on social media can reduce depression."	

This synthesis matrix helps in organizing and visualizing the data from multiple sources, making it easier to write a comprehensive literature review or research paper.