

# Synthesis Essay Tips

800-900 words (100 points)

Minimum of six sources, MLA or APA style and citations

## Consider your approach to the essay:

1. **Argumentative essay** in which you take a position on a particular topic and support the viewpoint with appropriate outside sources, while indicating the weaknesses of other viewpoints.
2. Remember that you are asked to **defend, challenge, or qualify** a position on the test.

## Successful writers do the following:

1. Use a wide range vocabulary appropriately and effectively.
2. Use a variety of sentence structures.
3. Use a logical organization enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence such as judicious repetition, strong transitions, and appropriate emphasis.
4. Use a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail.
5. Use an effective rhetoric, controlling tone—establishing and maintaining a voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

## Always consider the rhetorical triangle in your writing:

1. Use the sources as springboards or buttresses for your argument.
2. Do not let the sources drive your essay.
3. The College Board wants to determine how well a student can read critically, understand texts, analyze texts, develop a position on a given topic, support a position on a given topic, support a position with appropriate evidence from outside sources, incorporate outside sources into the texts of the essay, cite sources used in the essay.
4. Use the sources and your observations, readings, and experiences to **support your thesis**.
5. This essay is a chance to demonstrate your ability to develop a “researched idea” using **not only your personal viewpoint, but also the viewpoints of others**.

## A suggested structure:

In the **opening paragraph**, specifically address the prompt and clearly state your position. Use anecdotes, personal experiences, observations, startling facts/statistics, and other rhetorical strategies to create the context for your topic and position. Be sure to address the complexity in your topic so you can concede to the opposite position later in the essay.

Each **body paragraph** should be a support of your *defense, challenge or qualification* to the position. When you determine the topic of each paragraph, order them to best argue your position. Build up to your **concession** and follow with your strongest point in your final paragraph before your **conclusion** that powerfully connect ideas or finds another source that somehow unites all items discussed. Although, let the last—most exquisite—voice be yours.

Vary your use of **transition types**. If you have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. Transitions can be *at the end of the first paragraph, at the beginning of the second paragraph, or in both places*.

Use a mixture of **direct quotations, summary, and paraphrases** when incorporating your sources. Remember that you **MUST** establish a position and *each source you choose must support and develop* your position.

### Direct quotation/full citation provided at beginning of sentence ★★

John Broder, in his February 21, 2006, *New York Times* article titled "States Curbing Right to Seize Private Homes," quotes Scott G. Bullock, "...."

### Direct quotation/citation placed outside the text ★★★

In a 60 Minutes interview presented on July 4, 2004, a homeowner, stated, "...." (Anderson).

### Paraphrase of and direct quotation citation placed outside of the text ★★★★★

John Echeverria sees a danger arising from doing away with the powers of eminent domain. There is real danger the areas will experience "economic decline" (Gilbert).

### Direct quotation citation after sentence ★★★★★

Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents said that they "favored legislative limits on the government's ability to take private property away from owners..." (McGrath).

### Paraphrase citation outside sentence ★★★★★

In recent polls conducted by both the Washington Times and CNN, over 60% said "no" when asked if local governments should be able to take over private homes and businesses (Ruiz).

### Direct quotation inside writer's own sentence ★★★★★

As it turns out, high school grades are one strong determinants of the achievement of college freshmen, thus "standardized admission tests should not be considered as sole predictors of true college success," according to the National Association for College Admissions (Strauss).

### Elizabeth's Five-Star Ratings ★★★★★