

Reading strategies: The Difference between summarizing and synthesizing

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Summarizing and synthesizing are both strategies used in reading and research. They are important skills, as they help learners make sense of what they reading.

It is important to recognize that summarizing and synthesizing are different activities. Each has a different purpose, process and end result. This chart highlights some of the main differences between summarizing and synthesizing information:

Summary	Synthesis
Basic reading technique.	Advanced reading technique.
Pulls together information in order to highlight the important points.	Pulls together information not only to highlight the important points, but also to draw your own conclusions.
Re-iterates the information.	Combines and contrasts information from different sources.
Shows what the original authors wrote.	Not only reflects your knowledge about what the original authors wrote, but also creates something new out of two or more pieces of writing.
Addresses one set of information (e.g. article, chapter, document) at a time. Each source remains distinct.	Combines parts and elements from a variety of sources into one unified entity.
Presents a cursory overview.	Focuses on both main ideas and details.
Demonstrates an understanding of the overall meaning.	Achieves new insight.

Helpful resources

1. Comprehension Strategy – Synthesis / Summarization / Concluding
<http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/Synthesis%20handout%20by%20Deb%20Smith.pdf>
2. How to Synthesize Multiple Sources
http://home.cerocosu.edu/swiridoff/Resources/Composition/how_to_synthesize_multiple_sourc.htm
3. What is a Synthesis Question?
http://www.passged.com/student_blogs/maria/2008/10/07/ged-reading-what-is-a-synthesis-question/
4. What it means to comprehend
<http://www.suite101.com/content/what-it-means-to-comprehend-a72619>
5. Reading Strategies <http://www.mindtools.com/rdstratg.html>

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