



Summary vs. Synthesis (Reference)

Summary of Research material in an essay	Synthesis of Research material in an essay
Source material is described in summary form, with an emphasis on how that material relates to the overall essay topic.	Source material is critically evaluated for the position it takes in the larger conversation about the topic.
Source material is treated independently, with little effort to find connections or relationships between sources.	Source material is viewed as part of a larger conversation, and explored for how it relates to and connects with the other sources addressing the same topic.
Summary essays are organized by source, as each section of the essay summarizes the ideas in one source. In this way, they are really essay versions of the annotated bibliography.	Synthesis essays are organized by key issues or categories of information, and each section works to illuminate a new understanding of the issue by combining a variety of sources and examining the connections among them.