

Synthesizing Information

Information Literacy GEO this assignment addresses: Uses and manipulates information responsibly, ethically, and legally. Uses and manipulates information responsibly, ethically, and legally. Though students are assigned research papers in a wide variety of classes, they do not always know how to gather and sort information to logically progress or to support an argument in a research paper.

Objectives of this assignment:

- Students will be able to organize their sources and take notes in order to synthesize information for a research paper.
- Students will be able to sort facts in order to synthesize information for a research paper.
- Students will be able to create an outline for the logical presentation of facts.

Preparation: A fact sheet about the Cleveland Indians is used in part one. Before the session with the assignment, the teacher should make copies of the Cleveland Indians fact sheet to be distributed to the students. This exercise will work best if the class is divided into groups of three or four.

Download the Fact Sheet:

<http://www.lakelandcc.edu/stuservi/library/IL/ClevelandIndiansfacts.pdf>

Assignment: Sorting, Organizing and Synthesizing Facts

[Note: The following Synthesis of Information has been developed by Carolyn R. Johnson, Associate Librarian, Arizona State University West.

Background <http://www.west.asu.edu/johnso/synthesis/background.html>

Part One:

Each group will be given a fact sheet and will be told to group them as if they were going to use them for a research paper. Some facts about the Indians will not fit anywhere and should be set aside. The goal is to take make the process of organizing information into a logical progression easier.

Part Two:

Before this session begins, gather four or five brief articles about one topic. A possible research question is developed about the articles and then each group is given a set of these articles to work with. In addition, highlighters and post-it notes are needed for this exercise (one set of colored post-its for each article.)

Students highlight those parts of the article that they think will address the issue. After reading the article, they will take notes on the “Post-Its” selecting three to five key words that summarize the concept. This makes the student become selective and capture the main idea rather than using the exact words of the author. The Post-it notes represent the “stories” or facts from each article and after the articles are read, highlighted with the notes on Post-its, the group can decide which facts address the issue and which facts do not. Once the organization is complete, students should make an outline of their assembled facts. Outlines help students organize their facts into sentences and paragraphs for their research papers.

The goal of this exercise is to teach the student to take notes from their sources that are quick and simple so that only the main idea of the story is captured. The colored Post-its identify the key concepts and the source of the article. The outline gives the student a structure from which to begin the writing process.

Important summation/review points:

This exercise is intended to help the student feel more comfortable about writing the research paper by making the selection, sorting and organization of facts less intimidating.

- Students have selected and sorted facts into those which are relevant and those which are not.
- They have grouped the facts in such a way that they support their argument.
- They have created an outline that organized the facts into a logical structure to facilitate the writing of research papers.
- These simple exercises will help the student gather information so the research paper is in their own words