

## **Big 6 Skill™ #5: Synthesis**

### **ORGANIZING INFORMATION**

After you have taken all your notes, you are ready to develop a plan for your report. This can be done in several easy steps.

#### **When using Index Cards:**

- Sort your note cards according to the main ideas.
- Remove any note cards that do not relate to your thesis statement or questions.
- Organize the note cards so that the main ideas are in the order you think you will write about them. This order may change as you are writing your paper.

#### **When using Note Sheets or Webs, Charts, and Diagrams:**

- Number the main ideas in the order you think you will write about them. This order may change as you are writing your paper.
- Using highlighters may help keep track of main ideas.

#### **When Highlighting or using Self-Adhesive Notes:**

- Read over the information you have highlighted or marked, choosing the information you will use.
- Sort this information by creating an outline, or by adding new information from this material to your other notes, webs, etc. by writing down key ideas, phrases, and direct quotes.
- Develop a coding system to organize the information. For example, label any piece of information relating to Australian travel and adventure “A”, relating to Australian history “B”, or relating to culture “C”.

#### **When taking Electronic Notes:**

- Print the information you have saved in a word processing document.
- If necessary, highlight this information, or add this new information to your other notes, webs, etc. by writing down key ideas, phrases, and direct quotes.
- Use a coding system to mark the information on the printout.

In addition to organizing your notes, your teacher may require you to create an outline or some type of graphic organizer to show all of your information and how you put it together. The computer program, Inspiration, can help in organizing main ideas and supporting details. Inspiration can help you print out a formal outline or a web. Use this program in the media center or computer lab.

Refer to Writer's Craft for more detailed information on writing a formal outline.

### **Sample Outline**

**Australia is a place that can appeal to a variety of people: adventurous travelers, outdoor enthusiasts, animal lovers, or those interested in cultures other than their own.**

- I. Introduction**
- II. Wildlife and Geography**
  - A. Great Barrier Reef**
    - 1. Coral reef**
    - 2. Fish**
  - B. Outback**
    - 1. Desert**
    - 2. Animal life**
- III. Sports**
  - A. Cricket**
  - B. Olympic Games**
  - C. Horse racing**
  - D. Sailing**
  - E. Surfing**
  - F. Yachting**
- IV. Culture**
  - A. Explorers**
  - B. Immigrants**
  - C. Aborigines**
- V. Conclusion**

**An Important Note** before you begin writing your first draft:

Regardless of how you organize your information, **DO NOT** throw away any of your source cards, note sheets, webs, charts, diagrams, printouts, or self-adhesive notes. You may need to refer to that information once you begin writing the first draft of the final product and you will definitely need it when it is time to put together your Works Cited page. Save everything until the final draft of your paper or final project has been evaluated and returned to you by your teacher.

## **Big 6 Skill™ # 5: Synthesis - Putting it All Together**

### **WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT**

Once you have organized your notes and have developed a plan for your report, you are ready to write your first draft. As you write, you will be expanding your notes into your own complete sentences and paragraphs.

**When composing the first draft, remember to do the following:**

- Skip two spaces between each line so that you can add information when you review your first draft.
- Write on one side of the paper and use margins. This will make it easier to revise and proofread later.
- Make sure that you include all of the ideas in your organizational plan.
- Be sure to indent each new paragraph.

**Your report consists of three main parts: the introduction,  
the body, and  
the conclusion.**

**Use the following approach when you write your first draft:**

1. **Introduction** - Explain what your report is about using your thesis statement. Use interesting words to capture the reader's attention. The introduction should be one paragraph.
2. **Body** - Expand the topics, subtopics, and details from your outline or organizational plan. Write sentences that develop the ideas in your notes. Paragraphs will evolve as you write about each topic, based on the information from your notes. It is suggested that this section have from two to six paragraphs for each topic.

You may need to provide internal documentation of quotations or original ideas. Follow the directions on the next page.

## INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION OF QUOTATIONS OR ORIGINAL IDEAS

When including a direct quotation or original idea, the source must be credited within the paragraph. Not crediting the source results in plagiarism, which is using the words and/or ideas of someone else as though they were your own.

Follow these guidelines for the various types of sources you may need to credit:

**Work by one author** - Put the author's last name and the page number in parenthesis: (Silverberg 3). If the author's name is mentioned in the sentence, put only the page number in parentheses: (3).

**Work by more than one author** - Put the authors' last names and the page number in parentheses: (Smith and Jones 87). If a source has more than three authors, give the first author's last name followed by et al., and the page number: (Miller et al. 21).

**Work with no author listed** - Give the title or a shortened version and the page number: ("Ancient" 30).

**One of two or more works by the same author** - Give the author's last name, the title or a shortened version, and the page number: (Silverberg, "The Old Ones" 145).

**Nonprint works** - For personal interviews, television programs, or recordings, put the name of the person interviewed, the program, or the recording in parentheses. (Nova).

Review the information in Writer's Craft (199 for gr. 7; 201 for gr. 8).

3. **Conclusion** - Summarize the important points presented in the body of your report. If appropriate to the assignment, you may also state an opinion or course of action directly related to the evidence in your report. This should be written in one paragraph.

After you have written your first draft, the next step is to revise your report. Review your organizational plan and your report to make sure everything makes sense. You should also look for areas that need improvement, including your choice of words, your sentence and paragraph structures, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

## **Big 6 Skill™ # 5: Synthesis - Putting it All Together, continued**

### **REVISING AND EDITING**

#### **First check on the organization of your report:**

- Is there a clear beginning, middle, and ending?
- Does the report proceed in a logical order?
- Do paragraphs flow smoothly from one to another, or is there an interruption in thought because of misplaced ideas or sentences?
- Have you read your report aloud so that you can hear how the report sounds?

#### **Then, begin to make revisions and use proofreading symbols:**

- Use a red pencil or highlighter so that clear corrections can be made.
- Check for spelling and grammar errors, as well as errors in your writing.
- Use a word processor for spelling and grammar checks.
- Ask others to make suggestions before you begin your final copy.
- Remember that writing is a process and often requires many revisions!

**Finally, use the Writer's Checklist on the next page.**

## **WRITER'S CHECKLIST**

- ❑ First page of report lists 1) your name, 2) the teacher's name, 3) subject, period and 4) the date [9 September 2006] in the upper left corner.
- ❑ Thesis statement clearly stated in beginning of report.
- ❑ Topic sentences or transitional sentences are used in each paragraph. All paragraphs relate to the thesis of the report.
- ❑ Body of the report follows the organizational plan.
- ❑ Details presented relate to the question answered.
- ❑ Complete sentences are used.
- ❑ Direct quotes or ideas are credited with the proper citation.
- ❑ Capitalization is accurate.
- ❑ Punctuation is appropriate.
- ❑ Words are spelled correctly.
- ❑ Final copy is neat and legible.
- ❑ One (1) inch margins are measured on each side of paper.
- ❑ Each page is numbered including the first page.
- ❑ Main ideas are summed up at the end of report.
- ❑ Works Cited page is included.

## **WRITING THE FINAL COPY OF YOUR REPORT**

Preparing your report carefully and correctly assures that the work you have done will be presented in the best way possible.

**PAPER:** White paper (8 1/2 x 11 inches) should be used when using a word-processor or when typing. Use black or blue ink and white lined paper if handwritten. Only one side of the paper should be used.

**MARGINS:** Keep a one-inch margin on each side of the page.

**SPACING:** When typing or word-processing, start five lines down from the top and use double spacing. When handwriting, skip two lines from top of paper. Do not skip lines within your report, and do not write on the bottom line of the page.

**INDENTATION:** Indent one inch from the margin before beginning each new paragraph. Line up indentation of each paragraph in the report with the preceding paragraph.

**PAGINATION:** Pages should be numbered consecutively throughout the report in the upper right corner, except for the title page, which is not numbered.

**FIRST PAGE:** Include your name, the teacher's name, subject, and date in the upper left corner.

**INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION:** refer to page 31.

**VISUALS:** Any pictures, graphs, tables, or maps should be placed as close as possible to where they are mentioned in the body of your report, or at the end of the report, according to your teacher's instructions. The use of a word-processor or desktop publishing software will enable you to merge visuals with the text of your report.

**WORKS CITED PAGE:** Follow rules on the next page.

## **PREPARING A WORKS CITED PAGE**

There are specific rules concerning spacing, indentation, and information to be given for each source cited. Sample citations are listed on pages 37-46. A sample Works Cited page is shown on page 47. Be sure to follow the format of the examples exactly.

- Use a separate piece of paper for your Works Cited page.
- Your last name and page # should appear in the upper right corner.
- Center the words Works Cited at the top of the page. Make a note that the words Works Cited have caps only on the W and the C. (Works Cited should not be underlined or in quotes.)
- Put each source in alphabetical order by the author's last name. When no author is listed, alphabetize according to the first word of the title.
- The words "A," "An," and "The" do not count when alphabetizing sources.
- If handwriting, skip a line between each source.
- If typing or word-processing, each entry is double-spaced, with double-spacing between sources.
- Begin each entry at the left-hand margin. Indent the second and following lines of the entry five spaces from the left margin. (This is called a "hanging indent.")
- Do not number the sources.

**Before you prepare your Works Cited page, study the sample on page 47.**

## **YOUR FINISHED REPORT**

Follow your teacher's directions in assembling the report. Usually, the report will consist of the main body and Works Cited page. Sometimes, the organizational plan will be required as well. Suggested ways to bind your report together include using a report binder or folder, stapling, or using a paper clip.