

between yes and no. Instead, you are now prepared to write a documented essay that reflects the complexities surrounding the topic.

With these questions and issues in mind, you can begin to formulate a thesis, or claim, that captures your position on the topic. Consider the following working thesis statements:

- Community service can be extremely valuable in the development of both character and academics, but the negative effects of forcing students to participate by making it a graduation requirement more than offset the benefits.
- Though students may not recognize the value of community service until later in life, high schools should require community service to instill a sense of civic responsibility and encourage a lifelong habit of helping others.
- High schools should encourage students to participate in community service and reward those who do so without making participation mandatory for graduation.
- Required community service programs are beneficial to both the individuals who participate and the communities being served, as long as students have some choice in the type of service they engage in.

Although you might want to tailor one of these working thesis statements to use in your essay, each one suggests a clear focus while acknowledging the complexities of the issue.

• ACTIVITY •

Of the thesis statements above, select one you *disagree with*. Then, using the readings in the Conversation on mandatory community service, find three pieces of evidence supporting that thesis.

Framing Quotations

When writing with sources, it's important not to simply summarize or paraphrase the sources. You need to use the sources to strengthen your own argument. One easy way to make sure the sources are working for you is to include a sentence or two of explanation or commentary with each quote. You might use a lead-in sentence, so your readers know what to look for, as is demonstrated below:

Even without a service learning requirement, today's youth have shown that they are enthusiastic about serving the community. Howe and Strauss indicate that five out of six Millennials "believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment" and would accept additional "civic duties" to bring about needed change.

Alternatively, you might follow a quote with a sentence or two of commentary to remind readers of your point and how the quote reinforces it, as you see here:

The Dalton School, a small private high school, phrases it hopefully in the mission statement, which speaks of “empowering” students and “situating our moral center.” It continues on to argue (rather ominously) that “we must engage in community service because . . . we need our communities to survive.” The strong goals stated in this argument are certainly attractive, but their loftiness seems far removed from what a student might practically aim to achieve. In this regard, the Dalton School’s teaching goals are admirable but impractical because they seem to forget the individual student.

And, of course, be careful not to represent ideas or words as your own if they are not: give credit where it is due!

Integrating Quotations

When using multiple sources in your writing, it becomes even more important to incorporate the quotations in a way that is both clear and interesting. You want the transition from your own voice to others’ words and ideas to be smooth and natural sounding. The most effective way to accomplish this is to integrate the quotations into your own sentences. This may be a bit challenging, but the benefit is seamless prose. When you integrate quotations in this way, the reader can follow your ideas and see the sources in the context of your argument. Be sure that the result is a grammatically correct and syntactically fluent sentence, like this one:

Howe and Strauss indicate that five out of six Millennials “believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment” and would accept additional “civic duties” to bring about needed change.

• ACTIVITY •

Below you will find a paragraph written using the mission statement from the Dalton School as a source. Read the paragraph, and then revise it in order to make more effective use of the source.

Proponents of mandatory service learning programs often argue that whether a student chooses for himself or not, the spirit of service is important for students to learn and for schools to teach. The Dalton School, a small private high school, opens its mission statement by asserting, “Community Service is something that needs to be done.” The argument is that this experience “teaches us through experience—about the relationship between empathy and responsibility, about what it takes to be part of a community, in essence, about being human.” The strong goals of the Dalton School’s program are attractive because they emphasize the importance of having each individual “play a role in contributing to our communities so that these communities can continue to survive and prosper.” The contribution this experience makes to academic growth is not the only emphasis, though it is important: “Our school is a place of learning; we

need to integrate the ideals of Community Service into our academic curriculum." The heart of the Dalton School's program is, however, what they term the "moral center" that "will fortify a community." This is more than merely service; it is "that place where we can find the values of empathy, compassion, and caring" and "is the basis for civic responsibility and the success of that community."

Citing Sources

Since you will be quoting from several works, you have to keep track of your sources for your reader. In timed situations, you'll probably include only the source number or the author's name in parentheses after the quote or paraphrase, like this:

Modern Americans will recognize the term "service learning," a phrase made familiar by the two-thirds of public schools that have integrated community service into the educational curriculum (Howe and Strauss).

You need to cite paraphrases as well, not just direct quotes. Anytime you are using someone else's ideas, you must give them credit.

Another, more elegant, option is to mention the author and title of the work in the sentence introducing or including the quote:

Howe and Strauss indicate that five out of six Millennials "believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment" and would accept additional "civic duties" to bring about needed change.

If you are writing a more formal research paper, you will likely need to follow MLA documentation procedures, including a Works Cited page. Ask your teacher if you are unclear about what is required for an assignment. Guidelines for MLA documentation appear in the back of this book.

As you go through the readings and other texts in the following chapters, you will join conversations on a range of topics, reflecting on and integrating the ideas of others from different times and places into your own thinking and writing. Each chapter includes a Conversation in which you will practice this skill with a series of texts (including visuals) related to the chapter's theme. You should also be aware of the conversations going on around you all the time. How do people call on sources to reinforce their positions? And how do people enter an ongoing conversation and move it forward?

A Sample Synthesis Essay

Following is a brief synthesis essay about community service that incorporates the sources we have discussed. Note how the viewpoint expressed in the thesis statement remains central, with sources supplementing and supporting that view.