

Combining several documents into one synthesis

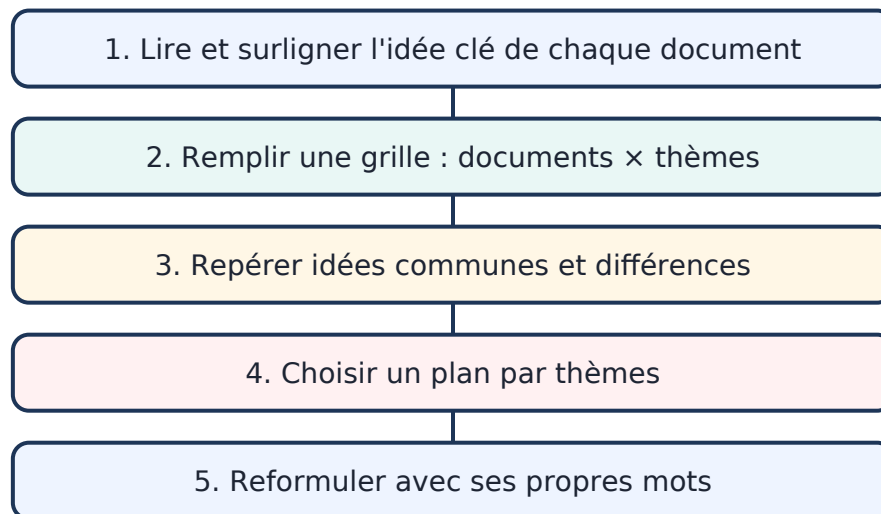
French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: To synthesize several documents in French, read each one for its key idea, compare them in a grid, group the shared ideas by theme, and rewrite them in your own words with reporting verbs such as *souligne que* or *nuance*. A synthesis is neutral, uses no *je*, and never follows the order of the documents.

Level: French B2 (CEFR upper intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B2, Reading

What is a synthesis of several documents?

A synthesis (*une synthèse de documents*) is a short, neutral text that brings together the ideas of two or more documents on the same subject. It is not a summary of each text in turn: you group the ideas by theme, say where the authors agree or differ, and use your own words.



From reading to writing: five steps.

How do you find the common ideas?

Underline one key idea per paragraph, then compare. An idea that appears in at least two documents is a candidate for a theme.

Document 1 thème A thème B	Document 2 thème A thème C	Document 3 thème B thème C
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Each theme appears in two documents: that is where the common ideas are.

How do you reformulate without copying?

Technique	Original	Reformulation
Synonym	Les villes manquent de logements.	Les agglomérations souffrent d'une pénurie d'habitations.
Noun form	Les loyers augmentent.	La hausse des loyers...
Passive	Les habitants ont créé ce jardin.	Ce jardin a été créé par les habitants.
Word order	On gagne du temps en télétravaillant.	Le télétravail fait gagner du temps.

Verbs to report an author's idea

Le document 1 souligne que..., affirme que..., constate que...; to compare: Le document 2 nuance cette idée, s'oppose à..., Les deux auteurs s'accordent sur...; to contrast: alors que, tandis que, en revanche. Use the present tense and the third person.

One idea, two sources

Selon le document 1, le coworking brise l'isolement ; le document 3 y voit en outre un moyen de redynamiser un centre-ville. — According to document 1, coworking ends isolation; document 3 also sees it as a way to revive a town center.

Common mistakes of English speakers

Prétendre que means "to claim", not "to pretend". Never write Je trouve que in a synthesis: the text reports, it does not judge. Avoid pasting more than two consecutive words from a source; if you quote, use quotation marks and name the document.

A skill for work and exams

In the DALF C1 exam, candidates write a synthesis of several documents. The same skill is used every day in French offices to prepare a note de synthèse for a manager.

Zoé's tip

Before writing, cover the documents and say the main idea aloud in French as if explaining it to a colleague. If you can say it without looking, you will not copy it.

Key points to remember

- A synthesis is organized by theme, not document by document.
- An idea found in two documents is a common idea.
- Reformulate with synonyms, noun forms, the passive and a new word order.
- Use reporting verbs: souligne que, affirme que, nuance, s'oppose à.
- Leave out je, opinions and quotations pasted from the sources.

Combining several documents into one synthesis: frequently asked questions

What is the difference between a summary and a synthesis?

A summary condenses one text. A synthesis combines several texts and is organized by themes, not by document, so that common ideas and differences appear together.

How do I avoid copying the documents?

Change the vocabulary with synonyms, change the grammar with a noun form or a passive, and reorder the sentence. Keep only technical terms and proper names unchanged.

Can I give my opinion in a synthesis?

No. The synthesis is objective: report what the documents say with verbs like souligne que or affirme que, and keep je out of the text.

How do I show that two documents agree?

Use les deux documents s'accordent sur..., de même, or comme le souligne aussi le document 2. Group both sources in the same sentence.

How long should a B2-level synthesis be?

For training, write 150 to 200 words from two or three short documents: a short introduction, two themed paragraphs and, if useful, a brief conclusion.