Synthesizing Information

Why Learn This Skill?

Synthesizing information involves combining information from two or more sources. Information gained from one source often sheds new light upon other information.

Learning the Skill

Follow these steps to learn how to synthesize information:

- Analyze each source separately to understand its meaning.
- Determine what information each source adds to the subject.
- Identify points of agreement and disagreement between the sources. Ask: Can Source A give me new information or new ways of thinking about Source B?
- Find relationships between the information in the sources.

Practicing the Skill

Read the passages and answer the questions that follow.

Source A "The flat tax. In the eyes of many fiscal conservatives, it's the Holy Grail of public policy: One low income tax rate paid by all but the poorest wage-earners, who are exempt. No loopholes for the rich to exploit. No graduated rates that take a higher percentage of income from people who work hard to earn more. No need for a huge bureaucracy to police fiendishly complex tax laws."

—*BusinessWeek*, September 26, 2005

Source B "Under Steve Forbes' plan the flat [income tax] rate would be 17%. All families would get generous personal exemptions, so that a family of four would not pay taxes until its income exceeded $46,000. To encourage growth, the Forbes plan exempts income that is saved and invested. Which means that the Forbes plan is really a consumption tax. It taxes people based on what they take out of the system, not on what they put in."

—*Forbes*, September 29, 2005

1. What is the main subject of each source?
2. Does Source B support or contradict Source A? Explain.
3. Summarize what you learned from both sources.

Applying the Skill

Find two sources of information on banking practices. What are the main ideas in each? How does each add to your understanding of the topic?

▼ Steve Forbes