Prewriting 3: Developing an Ending and Beginning

Now that you have gotten a rough draft of the body of your essay through writing about the points you want to talk about in the essay, we'll start working on your conclusion by reading through what you have so far and then setting it aside and thinking about what it all means.

Step 1: Start at the End! Draft your Conclusion

Think about how all of this fits into the big picture. Use the questions below to guide you. Remember: DON'T ASK THE QUESTIONS; GIVE ANSWERS!

When working on your synthesis essay conclusion, consider these questions:

- Who is helped or harmed by the issue? Who benefits and who is at a disadvantage?
- What are the short-term and long-term societal implications of this issue?
- Why does this issue really matter?
- Why is this issue relevant on a local, national, or even international level?
- Do you have any outside knowledge you could connect to the issue?
- How does the issue connect to the future?

DRAFT CONCLUSION:

So after looking at all these sources, it's pretty clear that understanding data brokers means looking at not just what these companies do, but also how different experts and advocates view what they're doing. The sources I looked at agree on several key things: data brokers collect huge amounts of information from tons of sources, often without people really knowing about it; this data is used in ways that go way beyond simple advertising to influence important life decisions; and the current system doesn't have enough protections for people's privacy and independence. But these sources also differ in important ways—some focus on how much data gets collected while others talk about its automated nature, some highlight economic discrimination while others point to political manipulation, and proposed solutions range from consumer rights legislation to industry transparency requirements to basic economic restructuring.

What becomes clear through looking at these sources together is that the data broker industry

represents a big shift in how personal information gets turned into a product and used. This has caused concern across the political spectrum and among researchers, journalists, and advocates alike. As technology continues to advance and more of our lives move online, the questions raised by these sources—about privacy, consent, fairness, and democracy—will only become more urgent. Who's helped by this system? Mainly the companies making money off our data and the businesses that can target us more precisely. Who's harmed? Pretty much everyone else—people who get denied loans or jobs based on hidden data, voters who get manipulated by targeted political messages, and basically anyone who values privacy. Understanding these different perspectives helps us see not just the problem in all its complexity, but also the range of possible paths toward fixing it. The future implications are huge because this isn't going away—if anything, data collection is only going to get more sophisticated, which means we need to figure out how to handle it now before it gets even more out of control.

Step 2: Find your thesis

Once you write a draft of your conclusion, you've really thought through your big ideas as a whole. Now, thinking about this, what would you say the overall point of what you've synthesized is? Write that out in one clear sentence. Make sure it's a statement, not a question!

MY THESIS STATEMENT:

By looking at reports from government agencies, experts, and news outlets, we can better understand how data brokers work, why their actions matter, and what people are doing to stop the misuse of personal information.

Does this thesis:

√ Sum up the main point of my synthesis?
√ Tell readers what I'll be covering (how they work, why it matters, what's being done)?
√ Stay neutral/informative rather than argumentative?
√ Make a clear statement rather than ask a question?

Step 3: Introduce it all

This step may take a bit more thinking, or you may have an idea right off the bat. How do you want to start your paper? Do you want to give an example from daily life? Do you want to share some statistics and facts? Do you want to define some terms and get people thinking about your topic?

Once you develop that paragraph, make sure and end it with the thesis you drafted in the previous step.

MY INTRODUCTION APPROACH:

I want to start with something relatable that gets people thinking about their daily life. I'll describe everyday actions that people do all the time—searching online, shopping, using apps—to make it personal and immediate. Then I'll reveal the surprise: that all this is being tracked and sold by companies most people have never heard of.

This approach works because it:
• Makes it personal and relevant to readers
• Creates a bit of surprise/concern when they realize what's happening
• Sets up the need for information (people will want to know more)
• Connects to the overall theme of hidden data collection

DRAFT INTRODUCTION:

Every time someone searches online, shops on a website, or uses a mobile app, pieces of personal data are being collected. This data doesn't just sit somewhere—it's bought and sold by companies called data brokers. These businesses gather information about people, organize it, and sell it to advertisers, companies, and sometimes even the government. Most people don't realize how large or powerful this industry is. By looking at reports from government agencies, experts, and news outlets, we can better understand how data brokers work, why their actions matter, and what people are doing to stop the misuse of personal information.

Reflection on My Introduction:

Looking back at my intro, I think it does a good job of:
• Starting with concrete examples people can relate to
• Building from specific (everyday actions) to general (the whole industry)
• Creating some tension/concern about the issue
• Ending with my thesis that tells readers what to expect

One thing I might revise: Maybe add one more sentence between the part about data brokers and the thesis to transition more smoothly? Something about how this affects us? I'll see how it flows when I put the whole essay together.

Congratulations!

Combine these notes with the ones from Prewriting 2 (the body) and you have done a rough draft of your Informative Synthesis Essay!

What I Have Now:

✓ Introduction with hook and thesis
✓ Body Paragraph 1: How data brokers collect information (showing FTC vs. Zuboff perspectives)
✓ Body Paragraph 2: How data is used (synthesizing Angwin, EPIC, Thompson)
✓ Body Paragraph 3: Privacy solutions (comparing EFF, CCPA, FTC, Zuboff approaches)
✓ Conclusion that puts it all in context and discusses bigger implications

Next Steps:

1. Put all the pieces together into one document
2. Read through and smooth out transitions between paragraphs
3. Check that all my citations are correct (MLA format)
4. Make sure my Works Cited page is complete
5. Proofread for grammar and spelling
6. Maybe have someone else read it to see if the synthesis is clear