

Step by step guide

Courtesy of M Wattiaux

Step 1: Search the paratext for information to contextualise the document

- What does the title and subtitle tell you about the topic of the document?

— The title suggests the text will analyse the causes of the gender gap in maths at school. Or Rather that it will examine ONE possible answer. An hypothesis in a way.

- Who published the document? When was it published? Does this help contextualise it?

It was published in The Wall Street Journal, an American daily. The name of the journalist appears. It was published after Document 1 (and actually echoes it / refers to the same study)

Step 2: Study the document and prepare your synthesis

- What are the 2-3 main points developed by the document that you need to highlight in your synthesis? Rephrase them in your own words.

Well, on this text, one has difficulty finding “2-3 main points”!

#	Main points
1	The text presents <u>the results of a study</u> carried out by French researchers on the maths gender gap in schools. It shows that the gap appears very early. ➤ THEY START SCHOOL there is no noticeable differences between girls and boys ➤ But the more time goes by, the more girls lag behind / the more the gap widens, starting after just a few weeks. The difference is huge in the second year already.
2	For the author, there is a simple equation sports = boys = numbers. Sports is the real source of motivation pushing boys into using numbers. It's necessary, socially for them
3	The author puts forward a straightforward explanation (and therefore solution) SPORTS. He embarks on a long listing of the various sports and how playing and watching the various sports involves counting. ➤ All players wear numbers two very complex games in particular, football and baseball ➤ Football (the points / penalties / and touchdowns need vary and constantly need to be calculated) ➤ In baseball too, the scoring system is very complex; even the position of players or where / how often they strike needs to be counted ➤ Simpler ones but calculations too in basketball
4	Even after their school years and they've stopped playing they keep following sports, betting, checking on statistics etc
5	➤ Conclusion: Again, the author equates boys and sports and sports and numbers, so boys and numbers, whatever their age. Their interest in sports becomes a source of obsession and drives them towards mathematics ➤ He suggests the maths gender gap could well come from this, as well as teaching methods

- In which order will you structure these points (linear synthesis or not)? Number the items.

It is VERY DIFFICULT to organise a well-balanced synthèse on this text. The parts are going to be uneven, which is not that bad

I/ Facts: what a recent study shows about the math gender gap> the author thinks there is a simple reason for this – points 1&2

II/ How do typically American sports involve calculating

- **Number of players and their numbers**
- **Scoring systems**
- **Distances and probabilities**

III/ It involves passion, motivation, necessity all along > best driver for maths

Step 3: Identify the point of view of the document

- Does the document defend a particular point of view? What tone does it use?

Well, the author has a very... specific vision, a reductive one maybe of sports and boys. Or maybe the whole text is ironic??? But the text sounds serious. He is repetitive too.

- What type of document is this? **An opinion piece / A demonstration**

- Step 4: Write your introduction

The latest studies, such as assessment tests in France or the PISA test at the international level, highlight the declining level of pupils in maths and, even more worryingly, the widening gap between boys and girls. Various studies have been conducted lately to try and understand why / what drives this / what this difference can be put down to. The author of this opinion piece published in the Wall Street Journal in the wake of one such study suggests a very simple reason: boys like sports and sports revolve around numbers.

Step 5: Take a step back from the document

Sample questions to ask yourself:

- Are there other positions or arguments that are not reflected in the document?
- Is the situation discussed in the document representative of a broader trend or not?
- Can you think of any other examples or counter-examples (including in other countries)?
- Is there a point in the document that needs to be explained in more detail?

Brainstorm ideas of arguments or examples you could use in your commentary:

>> It is difficult not to react quite vehemently to this text. But you have to be moderate and use very precise arguments.

Step 6: Formulate your key question

- What are the 2-3 key concepts that are related to the topic of the document? Fill in the boxes.
- How are these key concepts related to one another? Annotate the links between the boxes, focusing on points of tension between them.
- What question encapsulates the tensions between these key concepts? Formulate your key question.



Step 7: Write your transition



Step 8: Prepare your commentary

- What 2-3 arguments will help you answer your key question?

#	Argument	Example
		↳ Exploitation:
		↳ Exploitation:
		↳ Exploitation:

- What concrete and precise example can illustrate each of your arguments?
- In which order will you structure your arguments? Number the items, starting with the one that is closest to the document this commentary is related to.

Step 9: Write your conclusion