

Conclusion Tips

Many writers think that conclusions are difficult to write because they feel they have already exhausted what they have to say. But the conclusion is one of the most important parts of your essay because it gives your essay a feeling of completion and makes a lasting impression on your reader; it's a chance to emphasize to your readers why your ideas, argument, or research is important. **Keep your purpose in mind as you write your conclusion.**

Don't:

- **Don't just summarize what you already wrote**

Consider your audience. If your paper is long or complicated, a short summary could help your reader. If your paper is short, you probably don't need to summarize your main points. Do more than summarize. Your conclusion should *add* to your essay, not simply restate points.

- **Don't have a better version of your thesis in your conclusion**

Sometimes in the course of writing a paper, you will form new insights that you didn't have when you drafted your thesis. In other words, sometimes you will "write yourself into discovery." When this happens, you should *go back and change your thesis* in your introduction.

- **Don't introduce a new sub-topic**

Your conclusion should not contain new information that could have been used to support your argument; don't conclude with evidence that belongs in the body of your essay.

- **Don't start your conclusion with "in conclusion"**

Phrases like "in conclusion" and "in summary" may work well for oral presentations, but will likely bore your reader. Instead, start with a transition from your previous paragraph, or echo something from your introduction.

Do:

- **Do: Answer the questions "So What? Who Cares?"**

Make sure your readers understand the significance of the topic, or the broader implications of your argument.

- **Do: Elaborate on your thesis statement or research question** by adding new insight. Restate your thesis, but not in the *exact* same words.

- **Do: Echo the introduction**

You can bring your essay full circle and echo your introduction by referring to the same fact, quote, image or story you included in your introduction.

Works consulted:

U of R Writing Center. Writing effective conclusions. *University of Richmond, Writing Center* [Website]. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/conclude.html>

UNC Writing Center. Conclusions. *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Writing Center* [Website]. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/>

Hamilton College. Conclusions. *Hamilton College, Writing Center* [Website]. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from <http://www.hamilton.edu/writing/writing-resources/conclusions>

Conclusion Strategies

There are many ways to write an effective conclusion. The type of conclusion you write will depend on: the purpose of your essay, the length of your essay, your audience, the discipline you are writing in, and the assignment guidelines. Some of the following conclusion types work well for a humanities paper, but might be inappropriate for another discipline. **Always keep your audience in mind, and check with your instructors about their expectations.**

Ineffective Types of Conclusions:

1. The Surprise Thesis Conclusion:

Avoid surprising your reader with a thesis in your conclusion. Writers may feel tempted to leave the thesis for the conclusion to create drama. However, this is not appropriate for academic writing. Your reader needs to know your argument at the start of your essay so they can evaluate your evidence.

2. The New Topic Conclusion:

Avoid introducing a new topic or brand new evidence in your conclusion because it will distract your reader. Your conclusion should give your essay a feeling of closure.

3. The Emotional Conclusion: (X is a true hero; America is the greatest country; we will overcome)

Avoid conclusions that rely on emotional value judgements or sentimental clichés which are not usually appropriate for academic essays. In order to keep a consistent, academic tone throughout your whole essay, try to convey any personal value judgements using facts, not clichés.

Cliché: Rosa Parks is a true American hero whose courageous defiance forever changed the course of our nation's history.

Revised: Rosa Parks has been called "the mother of the freedom movement" because her small act of resistance catalyzed successful boycotts and protests, in addition to resonating with so many later activists.

Effective Types of Conclusions:

1. The Look-to-the-Bigger-Picture Conclusion:

You can connect what you explored in your paper to the larger context— concepts from your **course readings**, lectures, and discussion and/or **the larger conversation** about the issue in published writing.

Paper Topic: gender stereotypes in Alfred Hitchcock's film Psycho

Broader topic connection: Other Hitchcock films with strong women, **or** how Hitchcock's portrayal of women influenced other film makers, **or** the portrayal of women in films in 1960

Paper topic: The importance of Erikson's theory of development

Broader topic connection: How Erikson's theory of development influenced talk therapy

2. The Look-to-the-Future Conclusion:

If your topic addresses social and public issues (education, the environment, or social justice), you can offer potential solutions. For an editorial piece, you can suggest the logical future consequences of the issues you addressed.

3. The Call-to-Action Conclusion:

If you are writing an essay on a public issue, you could propose a course of action; if you are writing a research essay, you should make suggestions for future research.