

Writing an Effective Conclusion

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A good conclusion wraps up a piece of writing in a meaningful and memorable way. If a strong opening paragraph arouses readers' curiosity, a strong concluding paragraph satisfies readers.

I. Types of Conclusions

A. Summarize or restate the essay's main ideas.

This type of conclusion reminds the reader of the information presented in the earlier paragraphs. This strategy works well with an exceptionally long or complex essay. Summarizing your thesis and supporting evidence provides the reader with a brief reminder of your main points; however, do not simply repeat word for word what you have already written. Instead, succinctly remind the reader how the evidence specifically support your thesis.

B. Elaborate the thesis.

If your supporting arguments not only prove the thesis, but make it clearer and more specific, use your conclusion to elaborate upon your thesis. If your reader better understands the thesis now that all the evidence has been presented, then include a new perspective in your conclusion. For example, in an essay about ancient Greek sculpture, you may elaborate upon this main idea by describing how Greek sculpture would apply to Western art in general.

C. Discuss the implications of the thesis.

Once you have proven your thesis, the conclusion can explore how further research can expand your ideas. Implications can also include a discussion of how your thesis fills gaps in an area of academic study or how your thesis supports or refutes one side of an academic debate.

II. Guidelines for writing a conclusion.

A. Keep the conclusion simple.

Make your concluding thoughts brief. This is not the time to introduce new ideas or to go into great detail.

B. Keep the conclusion consistent.

Follow the tone and style of your previous paragraphs. Avoid contradicting points you have made. Relate the conclusion back to the introduction. For example, if you started an essay with an anecdote or observation, apply your conclusion to that introductory narrative.

C. Keep the conclusion specific.

Even when discussing implications or expanding your thesis, stay within the boundaries of your topic. Don't over-generalize your argument. For example, do not generalize in this manner: "Therefore *Romeo and Juliet* proves love conquers all."

Options for the final sentences of the conclusion:

- a vivid image
- a question
- a call for action
- a warning
- a quotation (however, make sure the quote is appropriate for your essay—not just name-dropping an established author)

For more information:

Lunsford, Andrea, and Robert Connors. The Everyday Writer: A Brief Reference. New York: St. Martin, 1997.

<http://lmu.uce.ac.uk/~lmu.esu/conclus.htm>

<http://www.richmond.edu/~writing/web/conclude.htm>

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