

Conclusions

Handout courtesy of Angela Gulick

A conclusion is the last paragraph in your essay, and it lets your readers know clearly that you have finished your discussion and what you may want your readers to think or do next. The exact conclusion needed will depend on your subject, your audience, and the effect you want your essay to have. Most conclusions, however, achieve these three goals:

1. provides closure to a document – signals that the essay is over
2. provides readers with further directions or guidance for specific actions
3. provides the author's final thoughts/reflections on topic and thesis statement
4. summarizes the main points of the essay*

*Note: If your essay is brief or not overly complex, avoid writing a conclusion that is pure summary. Readers will be able to retain information from a brief essay, so a pure summary is usually not necessary. Use your conclusion for reflecting on your essay's ideas, calling your readers to action, or discussing the implications of your work.

Special Notes for Conclusions

1. Make certain that your conclusion is clearly related to the thesis statement and the rest of the essay. Occasionally, as a result of going through the process of writing and discovery, writers change their attitudes and opinions. Just make sure your conclusion is consistent with the rest of your essay.
2. After draft is written, read your introduction and your conclusion back to back without reading the body of the essay. Reading these two paragraphs right next to each other can show, clearly, if your essay has "drifted" from when you began.
3. Read conclusion for a sense of direction. Interestingly, often times your ideas are more clearly expressed in the conclusion than in the introduction. The act of writing has allowed you to clarify and focus your thoughts. Always read your conclusion to see if you might be making your point more clearly there than in the introduction. If this is the case, substitute (and revise when necessary) your conclusion for your introduction.

Final Questions to Ask about Conclusions

- Does your conclusion provide a sense of closure for your reader?
- Does conclusion directly reflect the thesis statement of your essay?
- Does the conclusion lead naturally from the body of the essay?
- Is the conclusion consistent with the purpose, tone, and style of the rest of the essay?
- Does conclusion avoid new facts or arguments better handled in the body of the essay?
- Does conclusion avoid pure summary, especially if the essay is only a few pages long?
- Does conclusion effectively offer any final commentary or reflection on the topic?
- Is there a clear connection between the introduction and conclusion?