



Conclusions

What is a conclusion?

The conclusion comes at the end of the essay and provides summary and closing thoughts for the reader. The conclusion is a chance to sum up your argument, put it as strongly as you can, and push the limits—like a lawyer’s closing defense. A conclusion should stress the importance of the thesis statement, give the essay a sense of completeness, and leave a final impression on the reader. They are often the most difficult part to write because writers often feel as if they have nothing left to say after writing the entire essay. However, the conclusion can make or break an essay!

Good conclusions usually...

- **Answer the question “so what?”:** show your reader why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful and interesting.
- **Synthesize, don’t summarize:** don’t simply repeat or list the things you wrote in your paper. Instead, show your readers how the points you made and the examples you used fit together. You don’t have to give new information to create new meaning—you conclusion should not have new information, but a new way of seeing the information that you have already presented.
- **Redirect your readers:** give the reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the “real” world.
- **Point to broader implications:** for example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole.
- **Opposite funnel:** if your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general.

What to avoid

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or “in closing.”
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea, source, data, or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a paraphrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of the analytical paper.

Ways to Write a Conclusion

Echoing the Introduction

Echoing your introduction can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full circle. If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay was helpful in creating a new understanding.

Introduction

From the parking lot, I could see the towers of the castle of the Magic Kingdom standing stately against the blue sky. To the right, the tall peak of The Matterhorn rose even higher. From the left, I could hear the jungle sounds of Adventureland. As I entered the gate, Main Street stretched before me with its quaint shops evoking an old-fashioned small town so charming it could never have existed. I was entranced. Disneyland may have been built for children, but it brings out the child in adults.

Conclusion

I thought I would spend a few hours at Disneyland, but here I was at 1:00am, closing time, leaving the front gates with the now dark towers of the Magic Kingdom behind me. I could see tired children, toddling along and struggling to keep their eyes open as best they could. Others slept in their parents' arms as we waited for the parking lot tram that would take us to our cars. My forty-year-old feet ached, and I felt a bit sad to think that in a couple of days I would be leaving California, my vacation over, to go back to my desk. But then I smiled to think that, at least for a day, I felt ten years old again.

Challenge the reader to think about the material in a new way

By issuing a challenge to your readers, you are helping them to redirect the information in the paper, and they may apply the information to their own lives.

Though serving on a jury is not only a civic responsibility but also an interesting experience, many people still view jury duty as a chore that interrupts their jobs and the routine of their daily lives. However, juries are part of America's attempt to be a free and just society. Jury duty challenges us to be interested and responsible citizens.

Looking to the future

Looking to the future can emphasize the importance of your paper or redirect the reader's thought process. It may help them use the new information to see their lives or see things more globally.

Without well-qualified teachers, schools are little more than buildings and equipment. If higher-paying careers continue to attract the best and the brightest students, there will not only be a shortage of teachers, but the teachers available may not have the best qualifications. Our youth will suffer. And when youth suffers, the future suffers.

