

## Conclusions: The Importance of Locking In the Reader

A paper's conclusion is the author's last chance to make an impression on their reader. By creating a strong conclusion, a writer can cement their ideas in their audience's brains for long afterward.

Conclusions may seem intimidating at first, but they become much easier once you understand their structure and function. Fortunately, you can use what you already know about writing introductions to write conclusions. Like an introduction, your conclusion should contain a "hook" that will capture your reader's attention. The easiest way to accomplish this is to echo the one you used at the beginning of your paper. Then, rather than narrowing your focus toward your thesis, you should widen it in order to demonstrate how your topic is relevant to your audience.

### Tips for Writing Conclusions

Ideally, a conclusion should summarize or "wrap up" your topic. In order to accomplish this, you can do the following:

- Restate the thesis—reword it imaginatively, especially with an amplification or a twist! Just like the hook in your introduction, you want it to snag your reader's attention. Don't simply copy+paste the thesis from the beginning of your paper. Give it some thought.
- Remind the reader of your main ideas—refreshing your audience about the relevance of your argument will strengthen your thesis.
- Tie up any loose ends, such as unresolved questions, statements, or ideas. This works particularly well if you're writing an exploratory paper rather than one dedicated to proving your initial thesis. This is your last chance to satisfy your audience.

Another good method to use in your conclusion is adding a new perspective. Think of the essay as a "map", and the thesis is what you are attempting to lead the reader to in the conclusion. If you can summarize your idea in a new and powerful way, it can give your audience another way to relate to your subject.

You should also consider your audience! When it is appropriate to your subject, it may be helpful to take one of these approaches:

- Discuss what can be done about the topic in the future.
- Offer ways the reader could become involved in the topic or cause.
- Try one last time to convince the reader, by offering new insight or a different perspective.
- Challenge the reader to act on what they have read.

Most importantly, a satisfying conclusion combines the following traits: it stays on topic and doesn't ramble into related subjects; it is creative and memorable; and it contains a "hook" that will stay with the reader long after they walk away from the piece.

### **Common Problems to Avoid**

The biggest problem students seem to have with writing conclusions is a simple lack of structural knowledge. Commonly, previous classes have given at least a brief overview of how an introduction should be constructed, but have neglected to give the same attention to the conclusion. Because of their similarities, however, practice writing one can be helpful for the other. The most common errors students tend to experience in writing conclusions are as follows:

- The conclusion is simply a copy+paste of the introduction, with the sentences in reverse order.
- The thesis is not rephrased.
- The last paragraph rambles on in a circular fashion without really bringing the paper to an end.
- The writing simply dribbles off slowly as the writer loses steam.
- The writer introduces new arguments after the essay is supposed to be drawing to a close. Adding a new perspective on your topic is a good strategy, but it should not be something you need more information to explain.

### **Ways to Start**

Start your conclusion by building on the introduction—seek balance in your conclusion by considering what from your introduction might need to be repeated or emphasized. The tips below will help you do this:

- Think about how you would summarize this topic to a friend. Answer "So what?" or "Why should someone care?" Working to create a concise explanation of your argument

may help you generate ways to leave a strong impression on your reader. What do you *really* want your audience to take away from your paper?

- Summarize each of your paragraphs into a single sentence, so you can track the progression of your ideas. This will help you determine what is most important.
- Do you feel that you didn't state your claim quite the way you wanted? Start by doing so in "informal" language. You can always edit later to make it more academic. This is most helpful if the subject is one you are invested in or passionate about.

## **Conclusion**

Think of your paper like a cage: you want to lure in your audience with the hook in your introduction, and then build your main point around your readers to force them to consider your point of view. Your conclusion should act as the "lock" on the cage, to keep your reader thinking about your paper long after they finish reading.