

# The Conclusion: Your Paper's Final Impression

Conclusions serve a vital function in your papers. Without an effective conclusion, your paper will seem incomplete or unfinished.

An **effective conclusion** might do the following:

- 1) Tie together or demonstrate the relationship among the paper's main ideas and **reflect upon** those ideas
- 2) Restate the paper's main points (though not word-for-word) and their **implications**
- 3) Offer the reader a sense of closure
- 4) Challenge the reader to carefully evaluate your ideas and potentially act upon those ideas
- 5) Refer to an example to emphasize your point

Your paper's conclusion will leave your reader with a **final impression of your work**.

If your conclusion is **clear, concise, and relevant to the topic**, your ideas will seem polished.

A successful conclusion will strengthen your paper and lend credibility to your ideas.

Your conclusion's **content, style, and organization** will vary depending on your paper's genre as well as its purpose, tone (point of view), and audience.

- ◆ For a **narrative**, your paper will likely conclude with an end to the story's action and some analysis or insight about an event's effect upon the characters' lives.
- ◆ A **thesis-driven essay**, however, should conclude with relevant insights about your paper's content and how grappling with the ideas in the paper have shaped your thinking about that topic. You may also discuss the larger ramifications of your topic.

## Strategies for Crafting a Pertinent, Thoughtful Conclusion

One approach to writing a conclusion is to ask yourself a series of questions such as the following:

- ◆ How can I bring my paper's ideas together in a meaningful, insightful fashion?
- ◆ What are the last ideas that I want my reader to contemplate?
- ◆ Why do these ideas warrant the audience's consideration?
- ◆ What is the final impression of my work that I wish to leave?
- ◆ How can I ensure that I am not introducing any unrelated ideas that stray from my topic?

Once you have answered these questions, you will be well on your way to drafting an effective conclusion.

## Types of Conclusions:

Below are some different directions you as the author can take when crafting your conclusion. There are a number of things that should be considered while doing so: Tone, rhetorical mode, and your overall goal as the author to name a few. Read through the selections and choose one that will work best.

- ◆ **Explore the Broader Implications**  
This type of conclusion is best when you would want your reader to examine your ideas beyond the scope of your essay and lends itself well to research driven papers. For example, if you are writing about genetically modified foods, your conclusion could touch on the broader concept of the industrialization of farming in America.
- ◆ **Include an Example, Anecdote, or Illustration**  
To reinforce your paper's main points without summarizing those ideas, incorporate an appropriate example, anecdote, or illustration. This strategy engages the reader and can lend more concrete understanding to abstract arguments or ideas. Be sure that your example is directly relevant to your paper's topic and that it is appropriate in its tone (point of view), style, and length (usually quite brief).
- ◆ **Provide a Synopsis or Refer Back to the Introduction**  
This type of conclusion will often restate the paper's main ideas or revisit a main point or example from your introduction, making your paper seem well rounded and structured. Although this type of conclusion can resemble the paper's introduction, the phrasing should **sharply differ** from the introduction. To avoid repeating the introduction, be sure to add relevant analysis of your subject. Generally, this type of conclusion is used for a longer, more complex paper that warrants an overview of the main points.
- ◆ **Call the Reader to Some Form of Action**  
To engage your reader, suggest a plan of action relevant to your topic. For example, if your paper outlines some specific problems, you might use the conclusion to propose some viable solutions. This type of conclusion often offers a solution, analyzing positives and also reflecting upon the outcomes of other possible resolutions. Consider your audience and purpose, and avoid a call to action that might inadvertently seem accusatory or that might potentially alienate or offend your audience.

### In Conclusion...

There are some common pitfalls that you, as a writer, should be mindful of-

- ◆ **Avoid introducing information that has not been explored in the body of your paper.** If there is information that you feel needs to be included, consider revising the paper to include it.
- ◆ **Avoid sounding judgmental or accusatory.** Challenge rather than chastise your audience. Otherwise, you risk alienating them.
- ◆ **Be sure not to contradict or undermine your main argument.**
- ◆ **Transition smoothly.** An awkward or abrupt shift into the conclusion will make your reader feel as though they have missed something. For some help choosing transition words that best suit your purpose, refer to the Tutoring Center's "Transitions" handout. Remember to consider the type of conclusion you are writing when deciding how to phrase your transition.