



## Help With: Conclusions

Conclusions are often the most difficult part of an essay to write, and many writers feel that they have nothing left to say after having written the body of the paper. A writer needs to keep in mind that the conclusion is likely the last thing the reader sees.

An effective conclusion should: stress the importance of the thesis argument and give the essay a sense of closure. Here are some suggestions.

### **Answer the question “Why does this matter?”**

Show your readers why this paper was important by emphasizing the relevance of your argument.

### **Synthesize rather than summarizing**

Do not simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points you made and the examples you used were not random, but fit together into a unified idea.

### **Challenge the reader**

By issuing a challenge to your readers, you are helping to make your arguments relevant to them.

#### *Example*

Many people view jury duty as a chore that interrupts their jobs and lives. However, juries are part of America’s identity as a free and just society. Thus jury duty challenges us to be responsible citizens.

### **Look to the future**

Looking to the future can emphasize the importance of your paper or redirect the readers’ thought process. It may help them apply the information to their lives or see things more broadly.

#### *Example*

Without well-qualified teachers, schools are little more than buildings. If higher-paying careers continue to attract the best and the brightest students, both education and our common future suffer.

### **Pose questions**

Posing questions, either to your readers or in general, may help your readers gain a new perspective on the topic, which they may not have held before reading your conclusion. It may also bring your main ideas together to create a new meaning.

#### *Example*

Do campaign advertisements contribute to creating an informed electorate or a people who choose political leaders the same way they choose soft drinks and soap?

### **Conclusions to Avoid**

- The “*That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It*” Conclusion. This conclusion just restates the thesis and is usually painfully short. It does not push the ideas forward. People write this kind of repetitive conclusion when they can’t think of anything else to say.
- The “*America the Beautiful*”/ “*An Inspiration to Everyone*”/ “*My Greatest Dream*” Conclusion. This kind of conclusion draws on overblown emotions to make its appeal, but this style is usually out of character with the rest of an academic paper.
- The “*Grab Bag*” Conclusion. This kind of conclusion includes leftovers that the writer thought of but couldn’t fit into the main paper. You may find it hard to leave out details that you discovered after hours of research, but adding random facts and bits of evidence at the end of an otherwise well-organized essay can just create confusion.