# Writing an Effective Conclusion: A Few Points to Consider

1) Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. Just as it is important to make a good first impression, it is also important to make a good final impression. It would be a shame to devote great amounts of time and effort to your introduction, your thesis, your argument, your evidence, your writing style, and so on, only to have the paper fall flat at the end because of a weak conclusion. The conclusion allows you to have the final word on the issues you have raised in your paper, to summarize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. Take good advantage of that opportunity! It's worthwhile to remember that your reader (the professor or TA) will be grading your paper right after he or she reads the conclusion, so it is your opportunity to end on a positive note.

2) Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the question and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings. Essentially, your conclusion can help answer the question, "So what?"

3) Your conclusion, ideally, should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. Your conclusion can suggest broader implications that will not only interest the reader, but will also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

4) Play the so-what game. You can also play this kind of game by yourself, asking yourself "So what?" as you develop your ideas or your draft. You can also consider how this topic might relate to everyday life.

5) Know the purpose of the assignment. You might think specifically about why your professor asked you to write this paper. Sometimes if you can figure out why your professor wanted you to write this particular paper, you will start to get a sense of the significance of the topic. That significance, in turn, can be a stepping stone to a useful conclusion.

6) Free-Writing. You might try free-writing your conclusion – explain what you wrote about and then try to tell your friend what you learned as a result of writing the paper, how the ideas in the paper might relate to their experiences, or why the content of the paper matters in terms of "the big picture."

7) Read your introduction and your conclusion side by side. If they say essentially the same thing, you probably need to rethink your conclusion. It should do more than just restate your thesis – it should push the ideas further and explain their relevance.

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# Try to Avoid these Typically Ineffective Conclusions

The following kinds of conclusions are usually ineffective, but most of us have written conclusions very much like them in the past. Everyone tends to write these kinds of conclusions when they can't think of a better way to conclude. You've probably written one because they are easy to write. Below, we provide examples of overused and unoriginal conclusions with explanations of why they are not as effective as they could be. One of the best ways to improve your writing is to remember that the writer should work very hard so that the reader doesn't have to work hard – if you can work hard to write effective, original conclusions, your paper will surely benefit.

1. 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 in any way. People write this kind of conclusion when they just can't think of anything else to say.

2. The "Sherlock Holmes" Conclusion
Sometimes, instead of repeating the thesis in the conclusion, writers will state the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. You might be tempted to use this strategy if you feel like you don't want to give everything away too early in your paper. You may think it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in the dark until the end and then "wow" them with your main idea, much like a Sherlock Holmes mystery. The reader, however, does not expect to read a mystery. Instead, he or she expects an analytical discussion of your topic in an academic style. As a result, your reader will expect to see an introduction that explains what the main argument (your thesis) will be, followed by body paragraphs that explore evidence in support of that thesis and concluded with a section that summarizes and explains the significance of that argument. If you find that your conclusion is the first place where the reader fully understands your thesis, then you need to go back and revise.

3. The "America the Beautiful"/"I Am Woman"/"We Shall Overcome" Conclusion
This kind of conclusion usually draws on emotion to make its appeal. You may be writing about a moving historical or sociological issue, the plight of disadvantaged communities, the environment, or other topics that pull the heart-strings so much that you can almost hear the strains of one of the above songs in the background as you read. While this sentimentally may be very heartfelt, it is usually out of character with the rest of an analytical paper. A more fitting tribute to the individual, theme, historical event, or other topic would certainly be a more sophisticated commentary than just emotional praise.

4. The Grab Bag Conclusion
In this kind of conclusion, the writer throws extra stuff that he or she found or thought of, but couldn't integrate into the main paper. You may find it difficult to leave out insights or details that you discovered after hours of research and careful consideration, but adding random bits of evidence and irrelevant facts at the end of an otherwise-well-organized essay can just create confusion.