

# Writing Effective Conclusions

## WHY CONCLUSIONS?

Why have a handout just for conclusions? Because conclusions are one aspect of writing that we in the OWRC see writers struggling with more than almost anything else. Let's face it: conclusions are hard! They're arguably the most creatively demanding section of any given writing project. There are several reasons for this:

- The conclusion requires you to take everything you've just said and explain why it matters in a way that does justice to all of your points.
- The conclusion usually includes a restatement of your thesis. So not only do you have to craft a compelling thesis statement, but you have to do it twice in the same project!
- There are many pitfalls that are easy to fall into when it comes to writing conclusions, and you may not be aware of them until your instructor docks you points for falling into one.

The aim of this handout is to address the above stumbling blocks that make writing conclusions difficult, and to give you tips that you can use to make your conclusions not just acceptable, but effective!

## THE PURPOSE OF A CONCLUSION

A conclusion is the final paragraph or section of a piece of writing that summarizes the main points and restates the thesis. It should also leave a lasting impression on the reader by answering the question, "So what?" The conclusion is how you get a reader to connect what they've just read to their daily life. Why should your argument matter to them? What, if anything, should they do with this new information?

## HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE CONCLUSION

### **Restate Your Thesis**

A strong conclusion usually starts with a restatement of the main idea, or **thesis**, of your paper. This isn't a word-for-word copy of your thesis, but rather a **paraphrasing** of it. The wording should be different, but the ideas, and the order of those ideas, should stay the same.

### **Leave the Reader with Clarity on What They Should Do Now**

After restating your thesis, it's time to make it clear to the reader what it is you want them to take away from your paper. Do you want them to do something? Leave them with a strong call to action. Do you want them to think about your topic differently? Connect what they've just read to

the broader context. If nothing else, your conclusion should answer the question, “So what?” The way you do this is by showing the reader why your paper’s message is relevant to their life.

### **Less Is More**

The conclusion isn’t the place to ramble or introduce new information. As in most writing, concision (making your point in as few words as possible) can make all the difference in how a reader reacts to your writing.

### **Use Your Unique Voice**

Just because the conclusion is the most creative part of the paper, doesn’t mean it has to be the hardest. It can also be an opportunity for you to use your unique voice as a writer, letting your personality and perspective spill onto the page. Here are some tips to show your voice in your conclusion:

- Use specific, personal anecdotes or examples to illustrate your points.
- Use descriptive language and avoid cliches to help make your writing stand out.
- You can use your own perspective and ideas to approach the topic you're writing about, rather than simply regurgitating what others have said.
- Be honest and vulnerable in your writing and avoid sounding too formal or impersonal.

### **MISTAKES TO AVOID**

Here are some common conclusion mistakes to avoid. If you notice any of these issues in your conclusion, then taking them out can help make it more impactful.

- Restating the introduction or repeating main points verbatim.
- Introducing new information or arguments that were not previously discussed.
- Failing to summarize or connect the main ideas of the essay.
- Ending abruptly or on a weak note.
- Using overly formal or flowery language.
- Including cliches or overly broad statements.
- Failing to provide a clear call to action or next steps for the reader.

### **EXAMPLE**

Here’s an example of a conclusion that begins with a restated thesis, connects the message to readers’ lives, explains why readers should care, and doesn’t waste words:

The use of technology in the classroom has the potential to greatly enhance the learning experience for students, though care should be taken to ensure that essential classroom interaction is not lost. Through the incorporation of interactive tools and resources, educators can engage their students in new and exciting ways, while also providing them with access to a wealth of information. However, it is also important to consider the potential negative impacts of technology on education, such as increased distraction and

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reduced face-to-face interaction. Ultimately, it is up to educators to strike a balance and make informed decisions about the use of technology in their classrooms. As the use of technology continues to evolve, it is crucial that we remain vigilant in our approach and continue to assess its effectiveness in improving student learning. Therefore, teachers should consider both the potential benefits and drawbacks of technology in their own classrooms and make decisions that best serve their students.

Is this a perfect conclusion? Not at all. There's no such thing as a "perfect" conclusion. All you can do is write in a way that you think will be effective for your audience and that aligns with your own sensibilities as a writer.