



NO. 1 IN THE WRITING CENTER HANDOUT SERIES

End With a Bang, Not a Whimper: Writing Effective Conclusions

A good conclusion not only signifies the end of your argument, but also strengthens the argument itself by effectively pulling together the entire essay.

Decide what type of conclusion is best for your essay.

- Some conclusions **restate or summarize** the essay.
These conclusions are best when you want to remind the reader of the information presented in the body. Perhaps you have an exceptionally long essay or a complex argument. Summarizing your thesis and supporting evidence provides the reader with a brief reminder of your main points. Don't simply quote what you've already written. Instead, succinctly remind the reader how the points of evidence specifically support your thesis.
- Some conclusions **elaborate the thesis**.
You may want to use your conclusion to elaborate your thesis if your supporting arguments not only prove the thesis, but make also it clearer and more specific. Ask yourself how the reader better understands the thesis now that you've presented all the evidence, then include this new perspective in your conclusion. A conclusion of this kind can also apply your argument to a broader context. For example, a conclusion might suggest how your analysis of ancient Greek sculpture would apply to Western art in general.
- Some conclusions **discuss the implications** of the thesis.
Once you've proven your thesis, your conclusion can explore how further research can expand your argument. Implications can also include a discussion of how your thesis fills gaps in an area of academic study, or how your thesis supports or refutes one side of an academic debate.

Write the conclusion following these guidelines:

- **Keep the conclusion consistent.**
Follow the tone and style of the previous paragraphs: avoid contradicting other points you make, and stay on the topic of your essay. Relate the conclusion back to the introduction, if possible. For example, if you started the paper with an anecdote or observation, apply your conclusion to that introductory narrative.
- **Keep the conclusion simple.**
Make your points briefly. This is not the time to elaborate each sentence or go into great detail.
- **Keep the conclusion specific.**
Even when discussing implications or expanding your thesis, stay within the boundaries of your topic, your research, and your argument. Don't over-generalize your argument by using your thesis as proof of a cliché ("Therefore, *Romeo and Juliet* proves that love conquers all").

For more information on writing conclusions, see

<http://www.ssdd.uce.ac.uk/learner/writing/writingframe.htm>
<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb/conclude.html>
<http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/EssayWritingConclusions.html>
The St. Martin's Handbook (5th ed): 140-43