

Conclusions

What is a Conclusion?

A conclusion is the final paragraph in a paper; it is the paper's ending.

Guidelines for Conclusions:

- **There is no single formula for conclusions, but they will generally provide some reference (explicit or implicit) to the points made in the body paragraphs, the thesis, or both.**

Conclusions may also include

- summary of the specific points made or the argument in general (only in longer papers),
- new ideas, questions, or implications derived from or inspired by the points put forth in the paper,
- a solution or a proposal for possible next steps,
- a call to action,
- limitations of the argument put forth in the paper (and perhaps a way to address them or work around them),
- a final inference, generalization, analogy, or example to reinforce the argument,
- a denouement (a narrative device that explains what comes next and is most appropriate for narrative-style essays)
- a forecast or prediction
- narratives or anecdotes (these won't be appropriate for most formal assignments, but sometimes a conclusion is a good place to make a personal connection)

Note: The type of conclusion needed will vary by discipline, assignment, and audience.

- **A conclusion should begin with a transition to help the reader switch gears from the final body paragraph, but that transition should not be “In conclusion.”** Your reader will probably assume you are concluding the paper in the final paragraph, so there are more useful transitions you can employ.
- **A conclusion should NOT house your thesis.** The thesis statement almost always belongs in the Introduction. Sometimes a controversial or dramatic thesis may be restated for emphasis, but this is rare.
- **Make your conclusion intentional.** The conclusion allows you to reinforce, reevaluate, critique, extend, apply, resolve, reframe, etc. your argument. Don't include generic statements or platitudes in your conclusion that don't serve a purpose.
- **Remember that conclusions for shorter papers should NOT contain any summary OR a restatement of the thesis.** After all, if the paper is relatively short (5 pages or fewer), the reader will remember what the rest of the paper says. The conclusion may reference the thesis or points made throughout the paper, but you will not need to rehash or dwell on those elements.
- **Think of the conclusion as the mechanism that gets the reader out of the essay.** Without a conclusion, the reader may be trapped in the paper forever. So, consider what information, insights, or ideas the reader needs to move forward from your argument. In general, the early sentences in a conclusion tie more closely to the argument put forth by the paper and the later sentences will move into broader information (e.g., new insights, ideas, etc. derived from or inspired by that argument).
- **For the most part, the conclusion should not contain support for the thesis.** Occasionally, conclusions may benefit from the inclusion of a quotation or other form of evidence; however, body paragraphs should provide the support for the thesis. If you have additional points to make in direct support of your thesis, consider adding them to your existing body paragraphs or adding another body paragraph.