



Writing a Strong Conclusion

Sometimes the conclusion to a given piece of writing is dictated by the genre. For instance, business letters very frequently conclude with a friendly reference to the writer's hope for a mutually beneficial business relationship, while scientific lab reports normally conclude with a "Discussion" portion which explores the significance of the study's findings. It's always good to ask your teacher if he or she has expectations for how your paper will be formally arranged.

If your document does not call for a specific kind of conclusion, you need to conclude your paper using another strategy. You may have been told at some point that the "proper" way to conclude an essay is to summarize the points you've made. However, it's not a very imaginative or dynamic strategy. Experienced, creative writers allow themselves a wide variety of options. Some of these are listed below.

1. Discuss implications of your argument; extend the context of your essay to show what your thesis implies for the broader context.

Example: A paper about the style of writer Jane Austen could point to her influence on other writers.

2. Recall a point, issue, anecdote, question, problem, or dilemma you raised in your introduction. This strategy can give the reader a satisfying sense of completion and wholeness in the act of reading.

Example: In a paper about cancer treatment, start by describing a time you visited a cancer patient in the hospital. At the end of the paper, return to this narrative.

3. Conclude with a vivid image or startling element—for instance, a quotation that sums up your points perfectly, a vivid image, an earnest call for action, or a pithy rhetorical question.

Example: At the end of a paper about the dwindling number of schools for the deaf, end with a rhetorical question: "Given the impact these institutions have on their students, why, then, have they become nearly extinct?"

4. Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.

Example: At the end of a research paper about alcohol use among undergraduates, suggest that universities address psychological factors rather than focus exclusively on punishing offenders and/or limiting access to alcohol.