

Conclusions

Writing an effective conclusion can be one of the most important yet difficult aspects of writing a paper. Conclusions are designed to coherently integrate the ideas and arguments covered in the body of your paper. Conclusions also comment on the meaning and value of material covered in the body. In addition, conclusions can propose future trends, highlight broader implications of a study, or address limitations with the argument, all with the purpose of challenging the reader to think beyond the paper.

Effective conclusions

- **Are logical**
Synthesize the information in your conclusion similarly to how it was presented throughout the paper. Do not begin a new layout. Additionally, do not add new information not covered in the body.
- **Refresh the argument**
Copying your argument word-for-word from the introduction and using it as the conclusion is not effective. Reinvent how you phrase your argument and use the conclusion to wrap up all main points and themes in a new light.
- **Are usually one paragraph**
A conclusion should be short and straightforward. If you find that you are providing extended explanations and information, consider this for the body of the paper. Generally, longer conclusions are acceptable for papers 3000 words or more.

Conclusions should

- Include a short thought provoking quotation related to the thesis or overall theme.
- Propose a course or action or suggest areas of further research.
- Point to broader implications of the study.
- Challenge the reader and make the reader think about how the thesis applies to their life.
- Address limitations of the paper. This is usually seen in scientific writing.

Suggested structure

Most conclusions typically follow a format in the reverse order of the introduction. The purpose of the introduction is to narrow down to your thesis statement, while the conclusion is intended to expand upon the overall argument and touch on broader implications of the paper.

- Start the conclusion with one sentence to transition from the last body paragraph into the conclusion. One way to do this is to relate the main idea of the conclusion to the main themes of the paper covered in the last body paragraph.
- Then give a brief summary of the main points in the paper. This is similar to the mapping scheme in the introduction. Additionally, be sure that each main point is addressed in the conclusion.
- Follow the brief summary with one or two sentences to reinforce the thesis statement. This should not copy the thesis statement written in the introduction. Rather, demonstrate to the reader that your paper accomplished what it originally intended to do while nuancing the argument from the introduction.
- Finally, the conclusion can end with broader implications of the thesis. It may briefly address limitations of the paper, suggest other relevant areas which need to be further studied, or challenge the reader to reflect on the implications of the argument.

Helpful tip: Ask “So what?”

When editing your conclusion, after reading each sentence ask, “So what?” to help judge why each point is important. By consistently asking yourself this question, you begin to eliminate pointless filler phrases and sentences and to hone in on the essential elements of the overall themes and arguments.

Conclusions should not

- **Begin with an unnecessary phrase**

By time the reader reaches the conclusion they should already be aware that the paper is ready to be wrapped up. Therefore, it is unnecessary to begin your conclusion with phrases such as “in conclusion” or “to summarize”. Instead of using concluding phrases begin with the point the phrase was trying to lead up to.

- **State the thesis for the very first time**

Edit your paper to ensure that your main argument occurs within the introduction and not just in the conclusion. Compare the introduction and conclusion when completed to be sure that there is equal weight between the two.

- **Contain new information**

All information and points of the argument should be covered in the body paragraphs. The purpose of your conclusion is to wrap up the argument; there is no reason to introduce new information in this section. If you find that you have information important enough, it should be added to the body of the paper. Keeping all new information in the body will allow for adequate space to introduce, evaluate, and relate the new information to the overall thesis.

- **Focus on minor points of the overall argument**

Conclusions are designed to summarize the entire paper, not just particular points. Instead of focusing on particular points, write about overarching themes of the paper. If you find that the minor point is really important, consider editing and re-writing your paper to ensure that the particular point is recreated into a main element of the overall paper.

- **Make an emotional appeal**

Writing emotionally is typically to be avoided in academic papers. Conclusions are not exempt from this. Edit your paper to ensure that tone and style is constant from the introduction through to the conclusion.

- **Apologize and undercut the argument within the paper**

As the author, you are the authoritative figure on everything written in your paper. After spending much time researching and compiling information on the subject of your paper, there is no need to discredit your efforts by avoiding any assertiveness in your conclusion. Be assertive and show no fear in the conclusions you are drawing.