

CONCLUSIONS

First, conclusions should remind the reader of your thesis statement because readers can easily get lost in complicated arguments or focus on only the final paragraph’s argument. In order to prevent confusion, you want your reader to see your argument holistically both at the beginning and at the end of your paper. It is also important to reaffirm your purpose for writing: ask yourself, “so what?” “What larger purpose does my argument serve?” Additional questions to ask yourself are: “Where does my reader go from here? What is the next step for this research question? For the field?”

DO	DON'T
RETURN TO THE INTRODUCTION: If you begin by describing a scenario, end with the same scenario, but with a new understanding. You may also use key words or parallel concepts and images.	STATE YOUR THESIS FOR THE FIRST TIME or end with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
SYNTHESIZE, DON'T SUMMARIZE: Include a summary of the paper’s main points, but don’t repeat yourself. Instead, show how the points you made fit together.	INTRODUCE A NEW IDEA or subtopic in your conclusion. It is okay to point to broader implications or add further thought, but the conclusion is not the place for a new idea.
INCLUDE INSIGHTS OR QUOTATIONS from the research you did for your paper.	MAKE SENTIMENTAL APPEALS out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
PROPOSE A COURSE OF ACTION, a SOLUTION, or QUESTIONS for further study.	INCLUDE EVIDENCE FOR YOUR THESIS (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.
POINT TO BROADER IMPLICATIONS: For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event during the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact the event had on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole.	BEGIN WITH AN OVERUSED PHRASE, such as “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or “in closing.” Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across redundant in writing.

EXAMPLES

“For all we know, occasional viable crosses between humans and chimpanzees are possible. The natural experiment must have been tried very infrequently, at least recently. If such offspring are ever produced, what will their legal status be? The cognitive abilities of chimpanzees force us, I think, to raise searching questions about the boundaries of the community of beings to which special ethical considerations are due, and can, I hope, help to extend our ethical perspectives downward through the taxa on Earth and upwards to extraterrestrial organisms, if they exist.”

—Carl Sagan, “The Abstractions of Beasts,” in *The Dragons of Eden*, 1977

“If AIDS is natural, then there is no message in its spread. But by all that science has learned and all that rationality proclaims, AIDS works by a mechanism—and we can discover it. Victory is not ordained by any principle of progress, or any slogan of technology, so we shall have to fight like hell, and be watchful. There is no message, but there is a mechanism.”

—Stephen Jay Gould, “The Terrifying Normalcy of AIDS,” in *The New York Times Magazine*, 1987

TIPS

If your conclusion isn’t saying anything new or interesting, whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask yourself, “Why should anyone care?”

STATEMENT: *Basically, I’m saying that education was important to Douglass.*

So what?

STATEMENT: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.*

Why should anybody care?

STATEMENT: *That’s important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control.*

**The structure for this handout was adapted from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) Writing Center’s Handout on Writing Conclusions, which can be found at <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/>*

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