

WRITING CONCLUSIONS

A conclusion provides a thoughtful end to a piece of writing; unfortunately, many conclusions in college-level papers are little more than summaries of what has already been said.

Here are a few tips to make conclusions more interesting. You may wish to check with your professor about specific recommendations in your field of study; many fields have specific formats for conclusions and other parts of essays, research reports, and experiments. The points below are most applicable to papers in the humanities:

Avoid:

- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement that contains no substantive changes.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic (although you may end with a provocative question; see below).
- Focusing on a minor point in the essay.
- Concluding with a sentence tacked on to your final point.
- Apologizing for your view by saying such things as "I may not be an expert" or "At least this is my opinion."
- Attempting to make up for an incomplete structure. (If you say you will discuss four books but attempt a complete discussion of only two books, do not try to cover the remaining texts in a concluding paragraph. In such a situation, it's best to limit your paper to topics you can realistically cover.)

Conclude an essay with one or more of the following:

- Include a brief summary of the paper's main points.
- Ask a provocative question.
- Use a quotation.
- Evoke a vivid image.
- Call for some sort of action.
- End with a warning.
- Universalize (compare to other situations).
- Suggest results or consequences.
- Try to refer back to the introductory paragraph, either with key words or parallel concepts and images.