

Conclusions: Guide for Writing Associates

Part 1: Presentation

- ★ A conclusion...
 - both sums up your argument and helps readers see why all your analysis and evidence should matter to them after they put the paper down.
 - allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to summarize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject.
 - can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.¹
- ★ Strategies for writing an effective conclusion:
 - If you're having trouble starting your conclusion, **imagine that you are telling a friend about the argument of your paper and why it's important.** Write in a stream-of-consciousness style, without self-editing, then go back and revise. People often explain things quite logically in speech, but can have trouble getting their thoughts down on paper when they are worried about how their writing "sounds."
 - If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, **try playing the "So What" Game.** Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask yourself, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it.
 - **Return to the introduction.** Your conclusion should bring the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction. It is a good idea to re-read your introduction throughout the writing process; doing so will help you to keep the argument you make in your thesis the central focus of the entire paper.
 - **Synthesize, don't summarize:** Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the examples you analyzed fit together. The conclusion is your chance to pull it all together, and ensure that you have gotten your point across.
 - **Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study.** This strategy can help your reader to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications of your argument.

¹ <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/>

- **Point directly to broader implications.** For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.
- ★ Strategies to avoid:
 - Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as “in conclusion,” “in summary,” or “in closing.” Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as awkward and forced in writing.
 - Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion or ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes. Instead, your conclusion should shed a new light on the thesis that you presented in your introduction.
 - Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion. Instead, your conclusion should tie together points already made in your body paragraphs.
 - Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
 - Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.²

Part 2: Discussion Questions

- ★ What processes/methods do you use when coming up with a conclusion?
- ★ What’s the biggest problem you run into when formulating a conclusion?
- ★ Why are conclusions so important? How do they function in a paper?

Part 3: Activity

- ★ Imagine you have just written an essay evaluating a popular rock band whose new DVD you like. Your thesis statement is: “This band’s vivid special effects, unique sound, and variety of songs will put their new DVD at the top of the charts very quickly.” Now, it is time to write your conclusion. You’re having trouble getting started, so you brainstorm by rereading your paper, and then writing down a few sentences that sum up the points that you want to get across. **In pairs, re-order the following sentences to form a cohesive concluding paragraph, and be prepared to justify your decisions:**
 - Rock bands that want to remain popular need to take artistic risks.
 - Music that excites the imagination and carries me to another place is my favorite kind, but this band does it better than any other.

² <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/>

- Perhaps they'll realize that fans want a new sound when The Infernal Machine tops the charts.
- Too many bands rely on their past successes and don't experiment with something new.
- I can never listen to another rock band without comparing it to The Infernal Machine.
- The next DVD they produce will certainly find its way to my collection.
- ★ Original paragraph:
 - I can never listen to another rock band without comparing it to The Infernal Machine. Music that excites the imagination and carries me to another place is my favorite kind, but this band does it better than any other. The next DVD they produce will certainly find its way to my collection. Too many bands rely on their past successes and don't experiment with something new. Perhaps they'll realize that fans want a new sound when The Infernal Machine tops the charts. Rock bands that want to remain popular need to take artistic risks.³
- ★ After 5-10 minutes, go around the room and ask each group to share and explain their answers.

Conclusions: Handout

- ★ A conclusion...
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³ Example from:
http://www.stlcc.edu/Student_Resources/Academic_Resources/Writing_Resources/Writing_Handouts/concluding_paragraphs.pdf

- can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.⁴
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Discussion Questions

★ What processes/methods do you use when coming up with a conclusion?

★ What’s the biggest problem you run into when formulating a conclusion?

★ Why are conclusions so important? How do they function in a paper?

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Group Activity

Imagine you have just written an essay evaluating a popular rock band whose new DVD you like. Your thesis statement is: "This band's vivid special effects, unique sound, and variety of songs will put their new DVD at the top of the charts very quickly." Now, it is time to write your conclusion. You're having trouble getting started, so you brainstorm by rereading your paper, and then writing down a few sentences that sum up the points that you want to get across. **In pairs, re-order the following sentences to form a cohesive concluding paragraph, and be prepared to justify your decisions:**

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- _____ Music that excites the imagination and carries me to another place is my favorite kind, but this band does it better than any other.
- _____ Perhaps they'll realize that fans want a new sound when The Infernal Machine tops the charts.
- _____ Too many bands rely on their past successes and don't experiment with something new.
- _____ I can never listen to another rock band without comparing it to The Infernal Machine.
- _____ The next DVD they produce will certainly find its way to my collection.