

Conclusions

Just as your paper needs to begin with an interesting introductory paragraph, it needs to end with an effective conclusion. Which type of conclusion will work best can depend on the type of paper you are writing. Use the tips below to write an effective conclusion. So what should you do? Below are some effective techniques for concluding your paper.

A Note on Length:

Your conclusion should be **roughly** the same length as your introduction. Since you are not providing evidence and arguments to support your thesis in your conclusion, it should not be as long as a body paragraph.

Technique 1: Bookending

Invoke the attention-getter that you used in your introduction to bring your paper full circle. Explain why the ideas in your paper have made your introduction more meaningful. This type of introduction is effective since, by ending where you started, your reader will have a sense of closure. It conveys that your essay was well planned and cohesive from beginning to end.

Technique 2: Bow Tie/Hour Glass

Picture a triangle that is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom touching a triangle that is narrow at the top and wide at the bottom—like an hourglass. This image represents another effective technique for pairing your introduction and conclusion. Your introduction begins with an attention getter that is a broad idea and then it moves to a narrow idea (your thesis). An effective technique for your conclusion is to begin with the narrow idea of your thesis, and then broaden out to the bigger idea of why your paper has covered an important idea. You can connect to why the ideas in your paper were important to society, important to the author (either you or the author you are writing a paper about), or important to any potential reader (but do not use the informal “you”).

Technique 3: Chronological

Sometimes, your paper will follow a chronology or narrative. In this case, a natural way to end your paper is with the resolution to the story you are telling. Present the resolution of the story, the ways in which the story has made a change, and/or why the change is important. **Note: a narrative introduction can begin a story completed in a chronological conclusion.**

Mistakes to avoid

You will want to avoid these common pitfalls in your introduction:

- Just as you should not provide information or evidence in your introduction, you should not include new information or arguments in your conclusion. Your essay should present your complete argument, so throwing in new ideas at the end can imply that your paper was not comprehensive.
- Also, avoid statements like “These were just a few reasons why...” Again, you do not want to imply that your paper left out information your reader might want to know.
- Avoid a conclusion that simply repeats your introduction or summarizes the ideas in your paper. Your conclusion needs to be interesting and insightful.

Special Note for Timed Writings

In many ways, timed writings are different from process papers. While you should strive to include a complete, effective, thoughtful conclusion in a timed writing, you might find yourself racing the clock. In a case where you must end your paper quickly, it is better to end your paper with some conclusion than with no conclusion. In a case where you have just a moment to end a paper, close it with a “concluding statement” rather than a full concluding paragraph. Use a transition word or phrase and restate your thesis idea. The same rules apply—no new ideas, no “these are just a few reasons why...”—but this way your paper will have a clear concluding idea instead of nothing. **This is not an effective option for process papers.**