How to Write an Effective

**Purpose:** Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.
Location: Conclusion paragraphs are always the final paragraph of any paper.

Inclusion: Unless otherwise stated by a professor, always make sure to include a conclusion.

Length: Since it is called a Conclusion Paragraph, it is best to make it a full 8-10 sentences. If you are unsure how a specific professor may want it, don’t hesitate to ask them for clarification.

Strategies on writing effective conclusions:

● Play the “So What” Game. If you’re stuck and feel like your conclusion isn’t saying anything new or interesting, read over your paper and then ask yourself, “So What?” Try to figure out why this topic and your opinion of it was important enough to write about.

Example:

● Children need education
  “So What?”
  Children need education to grow up and be intelligent.
  “So What?”
  If America does not begin to change its education system, our future generation of children will not have the skills or knowledge to compete with other countries, which will inevitably hurt America’s future.

● Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This strategy brings 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 keywords or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction. That being said, do not simply restate what you wrote in your introduction.

  If your thesis statement is: “Childhood obesity has become an epidemic and now is the time to fix it.”
  Your conclusion should not read: “…because childhood obesity has become an epidemic and now is the time to fix it.”
An effective return to the thesis statement would be: “If we can start instituting more physical activities in school, and healthier food options, we can begin the end to childhood obesity.”

- 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 points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. **Pull it all together.**
- Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader’s thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.
- Conclude by redefining one of the key terms of your argument. **Example:** an essay on Marx’s treatment of the conflict between wage labor and capital might begin with Marx’s claim that the "capitalist economy is . . . a gigantic enterprise of dehumanization"; the essay might end by suggesting that Marxist analysis is itself dehumanizing because it construes everything in economic -- rather than moral or ethical-- terms.

- Point to broader implications. **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.

**Things to Avoid when writing your conclusion:**

- 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 wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. **NOTE:** If you need help with writing a Thesis Statement, please ask anyone at the SST Writing Center for a packet on How to Write an Effective Thesis Statement!

- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion. **NOTE:** If your paper is about puppy mills, do not conclude with the importance of spaying and neutering.

If your paper is about immigrant justice, do not conclude your paper with the importance of racial injustice. Although, there could be an argument about how the two are
connected, do not throw in racial injustice at the end because that is another topic, or it could extend your paper by several pages.

- Resist the urge to apologize. If you've immersed yourself in your subject, you now know a good deal more about it than you can possibly include in a five- or ten- or 20-page essay. As a result, by the time you've finished writing, you may be having some doubts about what you've produced. (And if you haven't immersed yourself in your subject, you may be feeling even more doubtful about your essay as you approach the conclusion.) Repress those doubts. Don't undercut your authority by saying things like, "this is just one approach to the subject; there may be other, better approaches. . ."

**References:**

http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/04/
http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/ending-essay-conclusions