THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Writing Center

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Conclusions

Conclusions are the part most readers will remember about a paper. They reemphasize the main thesis of the writing and leave the impression of completeness. The conclusion joins with the introduction to "frame" the body of the paper. Some difficulties can arise when writing conclusions because many writers feel they have already said everything. However, it is important to remember that a conclusion is not just a summary of your main points. Instead, conclusions should provide your readers with a sense of closure and leave them with something new to think about.

Conclusions can take many shapes, some of which might be discipline-specific. For example, some disciplines require that the last issue addressed in a paper be the implications of the research you have done for either further study or practical applications. The list below provides some examples of other ways that conclusions function. A conclusion might:

- Extend the context of your essay — show the implications of your thesis for a slightly broader context of issues
- Introduce a new but related point to get your readers to think about how your topic might relate to other contexts
- Ask further questions or address a challenge to your reader
- Evaluate your essay — tell readers other ways you might have approached your topic; positively discuss the limitations of your essay
- Project the future — discuss how the situation might change in ways that will affect your thesis
- Refer to something in your introduction so that readers feel they have come full circle
- Restate your thesis in a different way
- Summarize your most important points if and only if your points are complicated and/or if such a summary seems absolutely necessary
- Answer the question "so what?" — demonstrate the relevance of your argument

Each of these choices will leave your reader with a different sense of your paper as a whole so choose among your options carefully. Decide upon a conclusion strategy that best fits with your purpose for writing the paper.