

STUDENT NOTES FOR SUCCESS

No 17

Concluding paragraphs – let's finish off!

Nothing is more obviously unfinished than an essay without a conclusion. Students often hand in essays without that all-important concluding paragraph. Conclusions are important to the essay format. They indicate that the end is in sight and an overall explanation, rounding off or summary will be given.

The purpose of the conclusion is to provide an overview of the issues that have been:

- discussed
- examined
- debated
- explained

and point the way forward. It is one of the most important parts of the essay. Readers are keen to read the conclusions you have come to and any implications, limitations recommendations, you have regarding the subject area.

Writing the Conclusion

Begin with a summary of the essay's main points, highlighting the important issues and outcomes. The main points of the introduction must also be addressed in the conclusion, but this does not mean simply repeating the introduction.

Simple repetition indicates the writer has not given serious thought to the topic or the path the writing process has taken. What is important is to relate the findings to the essay question you began with. You do this by using key words of the question. Ask yourself:

- What conclusions have I reached about the topic?
- Have I addressed the questions I was asked to examine?
- Do I now have suggestions, recommendations and options to offer?



A conclusion must indicate that the writer has come to some sort of understanding about the discussion presented in the body of the essay. The discussion has been a process of research and analysis, and it needs to 'arrive' somewhere. The essay's conclusion is the place to neatly summarise the results of this process.

The following example of a conclusion addresses the issues raised in the question below (Williams 1995).

 Example

Essay topic:

What are the reasons for staffing problems within the hotel and catering industry in the UK? Suggest ways in which these might be overcome.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the reasons for staffing problems in the hotel and catering industry are varied and unlikely to be easily resolved. The problems have built up over a number of years and quick solutions are unlikely to be found. Many staff working in the hotel and catering industry regard their work as a temporary or transitional arrangement until they can focus on a more serious career path. If the industry is serious about addressing staffing difficulties, however, solutions can be found. Better working conditions, more attractive remuneration and more favourable career paths will go some way towards addressing these problems, as will some of the other recommendations discussed. Until these issues are addressed, staffing problems are likely to continue to be a major concern in the hotel and catering industry.



Adding your own thoughts

The conclusion often allows writers to add their own thoughts to the issue under discussion, as both writer and researcher. Readers will then make up their own minds on the concluding information presented. Readers will either agree or disagree with your conclusion. Of course, the purpose of your essay is to convince the reader to see your point of view.

Scope for future research

The conclusion can also indicate scope for further research of the topic. The conclusion should take a broader view of the future and leave the reader with suggestions and possibilities if further research is needed. Your conclusion might contain suggestions such as the following:



Example

It should be borne in mind that this essay examined only two major companies involved in manufacturing bed linen in Western Australia. The strategies these companies have implemented seem to be going some way towards making them viable once more. However, an analysis of a greater number of companies, and indeed of companies in other states, might produce different results. There is also room for comparison with overseas companies, which seem to be more competitive and successful than local companies.

Useful words and phrases

You might begin your summary with words which indicate that your discussion is drawing to a close, such as:

- in short,
- in conclusion,
- in summary,
- from the above discussion it can be seen that...



Example

Essay topic:

Discuss the role of technology in modern life. Has technology made our lives easier and happier?

In short, although new technology has indeed given people many advantages by giving them more freedom to enjoy their lives, it has not necessarily made them wiser, or happier. Moreover, we do not yet know the impacts that some technology is likely to have on young minds, and there is certainly scope for further research in this area, as indicated above. We know, for example, that some of the alienation felt by young people may be related to their use of technology. There is also some concern that society has become less humane and spiritual lives poorer because of less face-to-face contact. Therefore, while it is important to continue to enjoy the benefits of technology, we need to balance this with concern for human interaction and well-being. Adding meaning and purpose to lives is essential in a future which is becoming more and more impersonal.

Adapted from

Williams, Ken. 1995. Writing essays. Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Find out more at the CBS Academic Communication Development website:
<https://businesslaw.curtin.edu.au/study/student-experience/academic-communication-development/>

You might also be interested in *Handy Handout 2. Proofreading and Editing.*

Contact us at:
AcademicCommunicationDevelopment@curtin.edu.au