

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

Because a good conclusion provides closure to an essay, it makes no sense for you to introduce a new point or to go off in new directions. A dull conclusion can weaken an otherwise strong essay, so try to make your conclusion as interesting as you can. Your conclusion is your essay's last word; don't waste time simply repeating your introduction in different words or apologizing or in any other way undercutting your credibility ("I may not be an expert" or "At least, this is my opinion").¹

Some methods and strategies for effective conclusions:¹

1. Prediction

- a. Looking ahead, [we see that] prospects may not be quite as dismal as they seem. As a matter of fact, we are not doing so badly, it is something of a miracle that creatures who evolved as nomads in an intimate, small-band, wide-open-spaces context manage to get along at all as villagers or surrounded by strangers in cubicle apartments. Considering that our genius as a species is adaptability, we may yet learn to live closer and closer to one another, if not in utter peace, then far more peacefully than we do today. (John Pheiffer, "Seeking Peace, Making War")

2. Warning

- a. The Internet is the twenty-first century's talking drum, the very kind of grassroots communication tool that has been such a powerful source of education and culture for our people since slavery. But this talking drum we have not yet learned to play. Unless we master the new information technology to build and deepen the forms of social connection that a tragic history has eroded, African-Americans will face a form of cybersegregation in the next century as devastating to our aspirations as Jim Crow segregation was to those of our ancestors. But this time, the fault will be our own. (Henry Lewis Gates Jr., "One Internet, Two Nations")

3. Contradiction or Paradox

- a. A piece of writing is never finished. It is delivered to a deadline, torn out of the typewriter on demand, sent off with a sense of accomplishment and shame and pride and frustration. If only there were a couple more days, time for just another run at it, perhaps then... (Donald Murray, "The Maker's Eye: Revising Your Own Manuscripts")

¹ Kirszner, Laurie G. and Stephen R. Mandell. The Wadsworth Handbook. 7th ed. United States: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

4. Recommendation for Action

- a. Computers have revolutionized learning in ways that we have barely begun to appreciate. We have experienced enough, however, to recognize the need to change our thinking about our purposes, methods, and outcome of higher education. Rather than resisting or postponing change, we need to anticipate and learn from it. We must harness the technology and use it to educate our students more effectively than we have been doing. Otherwise, we will surrender our authority to those who can. (Peshe Kuriloff, "If John Dewey Were Alive Today, He'd be a Webhead")

Your conclusion should emphasize your main point in your paper. This means that your first sentence should be a restating of your thesis. In the conclusion, it is important to tell the significance of your paper. How will this way of thinking reshape what the reader already knows? What is this paper bringing that is new? By addressing these types of questions, your paper has a greater significance to the reader and becomes fluid.

Conclusions¹

Here is a plan for writing conclusions that are particularly effective: design your conclusion so that it is a mirror image of your introduction, not because it repeats the same information but because the conclusion locates your discussion with respect to further questions and problems in the way that your introduction locates the discussion with respect to previous questions and problems.

Flip the Cues for Rhetorical Elements of an Introduction to Create a Conclusion	
Introduction	Conclusion
<i>Prelude</i>	
1. Most readers agree..... claim.....	1. Thesis statement or main
2. However.....	2. This is important because.....
3. This is important because.....	3. A further question might be.....
4. Thesis statement or main claim.....	4. Now we should consider.....
	<i>Coda</i>

¹ Writing principles originally from Joseph M. Williams & Gregory G. Colomb, *The Craft of Argument*, 3rd Ed, Longman, 2007. Modified by and taken from Karlyn Crowley, *Argument and Writing Handout*, "Conclusion." Page 8.

1. Start by restating the gist of your claim. Your Introduction ends with a response that either resolves the problem or question or that promises a resolution; your conclusion can begin either by restating that resolution or by stating it fully for the first time.
2. Explain its significance by answering the question *So What?* Answer in a more comprehensive way than you did in your introduction's cost/benefits section; after all, by this time your reader is more informed, since s/he has already read your (hopefully convincing) body paragraphs. Your introduction states a cost that sets the significance of the problem; your conclusion can gain significance by stating the implications of your main point that lead to further costs.
3. Suggest a further question or problem that needs to be resolved. In effect, you answer the question *Now What?* Your introduction states a condition of not knowing or understanding something; your conclusion can end with what remains unknown.
4. Your introduction can open with a reference to previous research; your conclusion can end by pointing to the opportunity for further research.
5. End with an anecdote, question, or fact. If possible, it should balance your prelude. We call this the *coda*.

Examine this Flannery O'Connor introduction:

Though Flannery O'Connor's stories give us insight into Southern culture, critics have criticized her attitude toward race, calling it the product of "an imperfectly developed sensibility" and claiming that "large social issues as such were never the subject of her writing." But that criticism ignores her religious beliefs, which caused her to view racism not just as a social issue but as the symptom of a larger spiritual and religious crisis. If we fail to recognize her views on these spiritual issues, we risk overlooking her insights into cultural causes. Her stories show that her treatment of racism as a spiritual crisis is more sympathetic to equality than is apparent and suggests an understanding of racism that set her apart from liberals of her time. Once we recognize the spiritual basis of her thinking, we see her works in a new and surprising light.

Flannery O'Connor conclusion:

Those who claim that O'Connor was indifferent to racism fail to see how she saw past the surface of the black/white conflict to find a deeper crisis of faith—the modern failure to recognize the healing knowledge that comes from profound suffering. Indeed, these new insights into the human condition put her among a select few Southern writers who first saw the deep failure of the modern world to deal with human differences not just as economic or social problems, but as spiritual ones. Seen in this light, a rereading of her private correspondence would almost certainly show that her evangelical religion did not produce the high-and-mighty attitude that some biographers attribute to O'Connor's personality. Instead, her evangelicalism brought her closer to the problems of the world, and closer to how she herself could offer solutions. [Note: This writer does not include a coda. If we wanted to add one, we might include a quote from O'Connor's correspondence.]