CONCLUSION: RE-EMPHASIS OF THESIS

The conclusion of an essay, like the conclusion of a paragraph, gives the reader a sense of completion. Conclusions usually refer back to the introduction or at least re-emphasize in some way the thesis stated in the introduction. Often the conclusion briefly summarizes the thesis and the major supporting points. A good conclusion always confirms the audience's understanding of what they have read by reminding them of the writer's purpose. Like introductions, conclusions provide readers with an overview.

For example, the paragraph below would effectively conclude the essay on discipline problems in the Chicago high school.

Recently I visited my parents in Chicago and drove past my old high school. Now a warehouse for textbooks, the building looks abandoned and dilapidated. Crude, obscene messages remain scrawled on the walls, and many of the windows are broken or missing. Evidently, the discipline problems finally defeated the valiant but discouraged teachers. I am glad the school is now closed, for learning had become impossible in that environment.

Conclusions should not be cute or trite or obvious. The best conclusions are appropriate, clearly written, and straightforward. They do not strain for an effect they cannot achieve (such as humor, cleverness, or brilliance) If you have not written a good essay, your conclusion cannot save it; however, a good essay can be damaged by an ineffective or inappropriate conclusion.

Writing Conclusions

Just as an introduction can be viewed as a contract between you and your reader, a conclusion reassures your reader that you have fulfilled your contract. Your closing paragraph should leave your reader with a sense of completion—with the feeling that you have done what you intended to do and have finished what you had to say.

Several different types of conclusions accomplish this purpose:

1. Restatement of main idea.
   
   The main idea may be re-emphasized or reinforced. However, if you choose this type of conclusion, be sure not to merely repeat your thesis. You not only should vary the wording so that your conclusion is not too similar to your introduction but should also try to get beyond your thesis statement to express an appropriate conclusion while at the same time giving your reader a sense of closure.

2. General impression.

   If your essay is basically a description of an experience or of some person, place, or thing, an effective conclusion might consist of a statement of the dominant impression you have attempted to convey. For example, if your essay about your high school is largely a description of what occurred to you when you were there, you might conclude with what you remember most clearly about the whole experience.

3. Evaluation.

   An essay may also conclude with a judgment based on the information presented. For example, you might end an essay on your high school by evaluating whether the experience was essentially negative or positive.

4. Recommendation.

   An essay can be concluded with a suggestion for some action the writer feels should be taken. This type of conclusion is especially appropriate if the main idea is a controversial statement or one that is persuasive in nature. For example, you might conclude your essay about your high school's discipline problems by recommending that a new administration be hired or a new school board be elected.
5. Prediction.
   Even though a conclusion is the final part of an essay, it can be used to make a prediction on the
   basis of the major points made in the essay. This prediction should be closely related to the
   content of the essay, giving a reasonable explanation of what may happen. For example, you
   might predict in the conclusion to your essay about your high school's problems that the school
   will be closed down in the near future.

   Regardless of the type of conclusion you choose for your essay, the conclusion should re-emphasize your thesis.
   It should also be a clear signal to your reader that you have completed what you had to say. Following are some
   suggestions that will be helpful to you in writing conclusions.

   SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE CONCLUSIONS
   1. Do not contradict the point you have made.
   2. Do not introduce a new topic or new information.
   3. Do not conclude with a cliché ("You can't teach an old dog new tricks").
   4. Do not apologize for lack of knowledge, ability, or resources.
   5. Avoid often used, trite expressions such as in conclusion, in summary, and as I have attempted to show. There
      are less used transition expressions, such as therefore, finally, and consequently that may be more appropriate.
   6. Do make your conclusion brief and to the point.
   7. Do make the tone (serious, humorous, clever, straightforward, etc.) consistent with the overall tone of your
      essay.

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