

## How to Write a Concluding Paragraph

By Chris Erat

So, you're almost done writing the most fascinating, informative, life-changing essay in the history of intelligent writing. You feel drained of ideas, you're exhausted by all the research, and you probably no longer care about finding that "perfect word" to make everything fit together nicely. Word of advice: don't give up yet!

There is one important part of the writing process that still needs to be fulfilled—your conclusion. But don't worry, it is not as hard as you think; a little intuitive thinking and some patience is all it will take. Here is a quick guide to writing a reasonable, coherent concluding paragraph for a general essay, for a business essay/letter, and for a scientific write-up.

### *The General Essay*

*If you're finishing up your basic argumentative/critical lens essay, then here are a few rules to adhere by:*

- **Before You Begin!**
  - Look at your thesis statement (you have one, right?) and make sure that your paper reflects the argument made by your thesis. If it does not, then you should go back and re-shape your paper, making sure that each body paragraph somehow supports the argument made in your thesis.
  - Make sure that your paper is focused; if you are trying to prove that Odysseus is the coolest person ever, make sure that your body paragraphs verify this idea. In other words, don't start talking about what you ate for breakfast this morning in the middle of your paper!
- **Don't Add Anything New!**
  - One problem many writers have is coming up with something new to say in your conclusion that does not simply restate your entire paper. News flash: You don't need anything new to say in your conclusion! Rather, it should briefly summarize your argument in a concise, effective manner. Think about it—if you add more evidence in your conclusion that supports your idea that Odysseus is the coolest person ever, the reader will not have any time to reflect on what he/she read before they find themselves done with the paper. **An effective conclusion allows the reader to reflect on the thesis statement after reading the supporting evidence.**

- **Do Not Back Out of Your Argument!**
  - If you believe that Odysseus is the coolest person ever, then do not change your mind at the last minute! Stand strong! Believe it or not, some writers actually bring up thoughts that *disprove* their thesis in the conclusion, or they write in a tone that makes them seem unsure about the validity of their thesis. If you're trying to prove something, then prove it to the very end!
- **Make a Bold Statement!**
  - Take a chance—predict the future! For instance, in this paper on Odysseus, one could finish the paper like this:

“Hopefully after more people study the awesomeness of Odysseus, they will come to a similar conclusion that he is indeed the coolest person ever, and erect a shrine or two in his honor” (Erat, 2005).

Sometimes a bold statement like this can add a little spark to your paper. Take note: I am not bringing up any new ideas here; instead, I am simply making a suggestion relevant to the topic that connects my paper to the real world. This tactic might not work for every writer, but it can add a lot to your paper.

### ***The Business Essay/Letter***

*Need tips on your business essay? Trying to write a formal letter? Do not fret—here are a few words of advice on wrapping up your ideas.*

- **See Above!**
  - For the most part, writing a business essay will be much like writing your general liberal arts essay. Most, if not all, of the tips shown above apply to writing for your business class.
- **Be Polite, For Pete's Sake!**
  - If you are writing a letter to a prospective employer, or writing a research paper on supply chain management, be polite and remember to write accordingly based on your audience. You want to make yourself sound intelligent, not cocky!

- **Call for Action!**

- If you are writing a formal letter or a persuasive essay, there must be a reason for you to be writing it. So, make yourself loud and clear: end with a call for action. Let the reader know what it is you want; for instance, if you are writing to the town of Potsdam about erecting a shrine in Odysseus' honor, say something like:

“Odysseus was a good man and a shrine would benefit not only the town of Potsdam, but all of mankind. I propose the construction of a shrine on Market Street to honor his heroic legacy” (Erat, 2005).

If that doesn't help, here is a more serious example on how one would end a letter to the Joytech company:

“Joytech is an innovative company, and your investment would not only fund a start-up, but would also benefit Potsdam. I am asking for a \$25,000 loan as the first round of funding, to begin the operations at Joytech.”

See what I mean? While your call for action might not always succeed, it never hurts to take a chance.

- **Be Concise!**

- The town of Potsdam certainly does not have a lot of time to reread why you feel Odysseus deserves to be honored or Joytech be funded, so make sure your conclusion for a short letter or report stays focused and is only a few sentences long. It all ties back to the idea of “being polite.”

### ***The Scientific Write-up***

*Getting anxious to finish your 20-page research article? Don't skip the Conclusion. Can't wait to hand in your lab report? Hold on a second! Be sure you follow the Results with your Discussion that puts the results in context. Read these quick tips before you call it quits:*

- **Conclusion/Discussion** [Labs usually end with the Discussion. Articles for journals have Conclusions. Check with your professor.]
  - If you are wrapping up a research paper or a lab, it is a good idea to discuss your findings. For the most part, this means:

- Summarizing important findings based on your research/experiment
- Describing patterns that you see in your data
- Explaining why the results of your experiment did or did not match your expected results
- Suggesting the implications of your results, or describing the relevance of your results to the real world
- Providing an interpretation of results in relation to previously published articles/papers.
- Future work on the topic

Get the idea? As long as the information you include in your discussion/conclusion is relevant, say as much as you can!

- **Again, Be Concise!**
  - Do not ramble on and on in your conclusion, and try your best not to be repetitive. Also, make it sound like you know what you're talking about (which I assume you do) by using the language of your field.

So, you made it through this guide on writing concluding paragraphs. Feel any better? If not, make your way down to your friendly neighborhood writing center located on the first floor of Snell. We have plenty more tips where this came from!