

Closing Paragraphs

The role of a closing paragraph

Closing paragraphs often synthesize your argument and state why it is important. You can end your essay by reminding the reader of your thesis and main points, but the closing paragraph is not merely a summary. It should draw out the significance of your topic and thesis, contributing to—rather than simply rehashing—the rest of the paper.

Setting it up

You'll need to signal to your reader that you are ending your paper. You can accomplish this by explicitly using [transitional words or phrases](#), such as *in conclusion*, *in summary*, *to conclude*, *after all*, or *for these reasons*. However, transitional phrases sometimes seem awkward or forced, and you may want to employ more subtle language as you transition to your finale. One strategy is to revisit a point you made in your introduction. Another is to summarize your thesis briefly and move quickly to your discussion about its significance.

Content

- **Consider implications:** What does your argument imply? If you were to draw out the broader points of your argument, what would it suggest?
 - American political institutions influence which industries file trade complaints against foreign importers. Industries without political connections, but with similar economic grievances, are less likely to bring cases before the Trade Commission than well-connected industries. Moreover, industries with political clout are more likely to win. This implies that the current trade complaint system fails to accomplish its intended goal: to provide all American industries with recourse against unfair competition.
- **Answer “now what?”:** This is the central question your last paragraph should answer. Why should readers care about your argument? What does it add to discussions about the topic? Where should readers go from here? One way to generate ideas is to begin free-writing the last paragraph(s) as if you were writing an email about your paper to a friend. In your message, you would tell your friend what you learned by writing the paper and why the content matters in terms of the “big picture.”
 - Tariffs are higher in politically important sectors. This finding means that many American taxpayers pay higher prices for imports, not because of unfair competition but because legislators are subsidizing their constituents.
- **Consider qualifications:** Are there qualifications/limits to your argument or opposing viewpoints that are important to address? The end of your essay is not the place to introduce significant counterarguments, although these might be handled as areas for future research.

- **Propose a course of action or questions for future study:** Sometimes, your research leads you to favor some social or political action, or it suggests that further inquiry is necessary. In these cases, you might want to recommend a course of action to your readers.

Evaluating the conclusion

It is always a good idea to read your opening paragraph and closing paragraph side by side. If they say almost the same thing, you're not quite there. Ideally, the last paragraph should push beyond the introductory paragraph to make a more definitive statement about the topic, and should address the broader relevance of your claims.

Sometimes by force of habit or training, writers feel an urge to come up with a "space-filler" conclusion, a paragraph that cues readers the end is nigh without adding anything of value to the paper. Occasionally, students find that their final body paragraph, with a little tweaking, can provide better closure. If you feel your last paragraph is just taking up space, check to see if other paragraphs offer better opportunities to leave your readers satisfied.

Additional resources

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/conclusions.html>

This handout from UNC's Writing Center offers strategies for writing effective conclusions and highlights some common traps to avoid.