

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of a paper serves two functions: the first is to signal the end of the paper and the second is to leave readers with something important to remember. The first function is necessary for readers' sense of completeness, suggesting they have just finished reading a well-planned, carefully constructed paper. The second function is necessary for readers' sense of the subject, leaving them to think about what is important and appropriate about that subject.

There are two major ways to structure a conclusion: looking backward or looking forward. In looking backward, you may return to an idea from the introduction; in looking forward, you may forecast the future, call for action, discuss implications, or point out the significance of the ideas.

Looking Backward

Return to the Introduction - Utilize an idea that you mentioned in the introduction in order to bring your paper full circle back to the beginning. In the following example, the underlined words refer to a comparison from the introduction.

Example:

Despite all these suggestions, finding a summer job may still be as difficult as locating an inexpensive apartment near campus. But at least you can be confident that you have gone about it efficiently and looked into all possibilities. The rest is up to luck.

Restate the Thesis- In this type of conclusion, indicate the points you have used in your paper to support your thesis, and then restate your thesis (you do not need to restate it word for word). This conclusion will further emphasize the argument you made. The underlined words are a rephrasing of the thesis (Looking for a summer job should not just rely on luck).

Example:

Obviously, looking for a summer job does not need to be a hit-or-miss process. By searching all local newspapers, asking friends and family about possible employment and by applying for a great number of jobs, finding a summer job can be conducted in a systematic, efficient manner that should produce results. Almost always, it will.

Summarize the Main Points-This conclusion is most appropriate for longer papers in which you may have made many points and want to recap them all for emphasis. The underlined words are the main points from the body of the paper.

Example:

What is important is to start looking for a summer job early and to follow the specific suggestions noted here. You may not want to investigate all possibilities - employers overseas, federal agencies, local or state governments, industries in other areas, and local businesses- but you should realize that it is better to have too many opportunities than too few.

Looking Forward

Forecast the Future - This type of conclusion makes a forecast about the future based upon the thesis. The following example predicts that, if you rely on luck to find a summer job (the thesis), you may not find a job and may have to pursue other options (prediction). The underlined words are the forecast of the future.

Example:

Despite these suggestions, you may not find summer work. The growing demands for these positions and the diminishing supply of them means that less young people will be employed this summer. The result may be a return to the campus to attend summer sessions. Or, the end product might well be many three-year bachelor's degrees. And that is what the future may hold.

Call for Action-This type of conclusion makes at least one suggestion, or call to action, in response to the thesis. The following example makes suggestions in response to the thesis that looking for a summer job should not be based only on luck. It lists concrete ways to search for a job that do not rely on luck. The underlined words are the calls for action.

Example:

The important point to remember is to start looking for that summer job today. You can write letters to agencies, get a copy your local paper's classified ads, and search the Internet. They who hesitate may be lost this summer.

Discuss Implications-This type of conclusion discusses implications of the thesis. The following example discusses the implications of relying only on luck to find a summer job. The underlined words are the implications.

Example:

The implications of inaction should be apparent. Waiting for luck to strike may result in not getting any job at all.

Point out the Significance of Ideas- This type of conclusion demonstrates the larger significance of the paper's argument. The underlined words point out a larger significance of the thesis.

Example:

Perhaps what is more significant than these specific suggestions is that even such an undertaking as finding a summer job can be carefully researched and planned. Some people go through life haphazardly, but other people anticipate problems and study how to meet them. Doing the latter is usually more rewarding.

Source: Adelstein, Michael and Jean G. Pival. The Writing Commitment. Second Edition. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980.