

A large, irregular splash of light blue watercolor paint is centered on a white background. The splash has soft, feathered edges and varying shades of blue, from pale to a slightly darker hue in the center. The text is overlaid on this splash.

Conclusions

Ending Your Essay Effectively

What should a conclusion paragraph **DO**?

In both rhetorical analysis and argumentative essays, the conclusion should...

- ❑ Synthesize (weave together) the main points of your line of reasoning.
- ❑ Push the reader to consider the importance or real-life connection of your analysis or argument.

What should a conclusion paragraph **NOT** do?

- ❑ Begin with an **unnecessary, overused phrase**, such as “in conclusion/summary/closing/a nutshell”.
- ❑ State your thesis **FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE ESSAY**.
- ❑ **Just be the thesis statement** in new words (probably okay in a **timed** situation, but getting that sophistication point is more likely with a better conclusion)
- ❑ Introduce **new ideas or subtopics, or evidence** that should be in the body paragraphs
- ❑ Make **sentimental, emotional appeals** that are out of character with the rest of the paper.

[This information comes from The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill](#)

How to Write an Effective Conclusion: Strategies

- ❑ Keep asking yourself “**so what?**” to figure out why your argument **matters**.
- ❑ Return to theme or **themes** in the **introduction**.
 - If you begin by describing a scenario, return to that scenario and resolve it.
 - Use **key words or parallel concepts and images** that you also used in the intro.
- ❑ **EXAMPLES:**
 - ❑ You: Basically, I’m just saying that education was important to Douglass. Friend: So what? You: Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen. Friend: Why should anybody care? You: That’s important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.
 - ❑ Introduction of essay includes a scenario of working women paying taxes but unable to vote; conclusion acknowledges that women at the polls today owe much to the suffragists like Carrie Chapman Catt.

[This information comes from The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill](#)

How to Write an Effective Conclusion: Strategies

- ❑ **Synthesize**, don't summarize.
 - Include a brief summary of the main points, but don't just restate what's in your paper.
 - Show how the points **fit together** and/or pull it all together.
- ❑ Include a provocative insight or **quotation** from the **prompt text** or your research.

EXAMPLES:

- ❑ Education prepares students for a life after graduation, but along the way also implicitly teaches the value of civic engagement and helps improve the general welfare of our nation's children.
- ❑ A century past Gatt's speech, American women represent constituents in all levels of government and make their voices heard at the polls, better fulfilling Lincoln's ideal that we are a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

[This information comes from The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill](#)

How to Write an Effective Conclusion: Strategies

- ❑ Propose a course of action, a **solution**, or question for further study.
- ❑ Point to **broader implications** of the text under study or your argument.

EXAMPLES

- ❑ A continued emphasis on these benefits of education might help American school children feel like their time is being put to good use. Teachers should take the time to explain why and how their lessons are important and applicable to students' futures.
- ❑ Catt's address was one voice of many in the movement for women's suffrage, but her address represented the voice of millions more.

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Example Rhetorical Analysis Conclusion

[INTRODUCTION] On the floor of Congress in 1917, Carrie Chapman Catt delivered a defense of the Nineteenth Amendment to the assembled men. The long battle for women's suffrage is clear in her argument, which she develops through historical precedent, political strategizing, and a careful aversion to emotional appeals.

[CONCLUSION] Catt's argument for suffrage is a tour of historical precedent for her case. Though effective on its own, she bolsters her reasoning with political strategy and a measured, unemotional tone. While her address was one voice of many in the movement for women's suffrage, by choosing to speak she represented the voices of millions.

What makes this conclusion effective?

← reviews the main line of reasoning without just rewriting the thesis; shows how one strategy builds on another.

← the writer ends the piece with a compelling final thought that puts the text under study in a greater historical context, without getting overly sentimental.

Example Argument Conclusion

INTRODUCTION Every school day, millions of American students wake up and wonder why they have to sacrifice precious hours of their youth in the name of education. Despite a lack of value some individuals may place on education, the United States does have several important objectives for its public school system. The main functions of American education are to prepare students for adult life, create engaged citizens, and promote the general welfare of children.

CONCLUSION Education prepares students for a life after graduation, but along the way also implicitly teaches the value of civic engagement. Having a nationally regulated public school system also helps improve the general welfare of our nation's children, which is essential before the other two goals can be met. A continued emphasis on the benefits of education might help American school children feel like it is worth waking up early for, or at least that their time is being put to good use.

What makes this conclusion effective?

← reviews the main line of reasoning without just rewriting the thesis; shows how the main points are connected.

← the writer ties back to key themes from the intro, and offers a solution to the problem set up there.

Practice: Revising a Conclusion

1. In your notes, carefully identify the several ineffective parts of the example conclusion paragraph.
2. Then, annotate with your ideas on how to best revise this conclusion.