



DEVELOPING THE CONCLUSION

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An effective conclusion ties together different parts of a paper and reinforces its central message. Avoid conclusions that are merely a lame restatement of points you have made abundantly clear. Instead, make your reader feel that your conclusion was needed to make your paper a satisfying whole. Any one of the following methods may be used:

1. Use an appropriate quotation.
2. Ask a provocative question.
3. Use an anecdote.
4. Make a plea for a change.
5. Present a solution.
6. Make a prediction.
7. Make a provocative statement.
8. Use a memorable restatement of the thesis.
9. Summarize the main points.
10. Relate the thesis to a general trend.

1. USE AN APPROPRIATE QUOTATION: A quotation from a newspaper, magazine, interview, or another reliable source may be an effective way to conclude the essay. Using one of the accepted methods of documentation such as MLA or APA, the writer should document the source. For example:

By the time it was all over, 100,000 people had come to Lake Placid, and private homes and hastily winterized hotels accommodated 15,324 overnight guests at the peak. Both NBC and CBS covered every event, and "as far south as Georgia and out to the Middle West, radio listeners thrilled to the reports of the announcers." They heard Americans win six of the fourteen gold medals, four silvers, and two bronzes. Finally, they hear Count de Baillet-Latour, the President of the IOC, step to the awards podium and close the III Olympic Games. He called on the youth of the world to gather again in four years, "...and may they display cheerfulness and concord." As he spoke, dust fell and a blizzard swept down from the high Adirondacks. The snow swirled in across the nearby lakes and draped the crowd in white as the Olympic flag was folded.

For better or worse, divorce continues to split families at an alarming rate. The number of children involved in divorce has tripled in the last twenty years. And though parents, children, and professionals are struggling to deal with such new domestic realities as single-parent families, there are no long-standing precedents, no established role models to draw from. Divorce and its aftermath can be a labyrinth of confusion and conflict, some of which may never be resolved. To divorce lecturer and author Rabbi Earl Grollman of Temple Beth El in Belmont, Mass., divorce can be even more traumatic than death. "This big difference is, death has closure; it's over," says Grollman, who performs divorce ceremonies for families. "With divorce, it's never over."

2. ASK A PROVOCATIVE QUESTION: A question must grow from the content of the paper. It should provoke thought.
For example:

But even if no such catastrophe were to occur, say the people at Project MAC, the development of a machine more intelligent than man will surely deal with a severe shock to man's sense of his own worth. Even shaky is disturbing, and a creature that deposed man from the pinnacle of creation might tempt us to ask ourselves: Is the human brain outmoded? Has evolution in protoplasm been replaced by evolution in circuitry?

The increasing divorce rate is not merely a colorful statistic. It raises disturbing questions. How great is the damage done to children? Does divorce solve a problem or only run away from it? Is marriage itself a dying institution? Can a society of broken homes be a healthy society? These and other questions will trouble this nation for years to come.

3. USE AN ANECDOTE: A short anecdote may reinforce the thesis.
For example:

Doctors and patients alike are impressed with the emotional rehabilitation created by the operation. "Reconstruction changed my life more in a pleasant way than being sick changed it in a negative way," says Susan Morgan. A Maryland woman, Patricia Gosselin, who had a mastectomy at 35, refused to let her husband look at her naked body for seven years; she wore prosthesis and a bra even to bed. When she came home from the hospital with a newly constructed breast and showed it to her husband, she remembers, "His eyes filled with tears of joy. He just couldn't believe it. I feel as though I have been set free."

There is another resemblance between skiing and politics that has nothing to do with ideology. I mentioned at the outset that I was skiing last winter. I did so until one bright Sunday when I went out in the company of another professor of mature years. It was a day of brilliant sun; the snow was good except for occasional bare patches. Precisely when I was least expecting it--when my feeling of confidence and my sense of mastery were greatest--I fell on a rock and broke my behind. Exactly the same happens in politics and to a lot of men in an election year.

4. MAKE A PLEA FOR A CHANGE: The conclusion may ask that some action be taken to remedy the problem discussed in the essay.
For example:

It is long past time that we began walking the middle of the road, which means accepting our full responsibilities as a decent (and wealthy) world citizen, while leaving it to the people of every country to pursue their own destiny, socialist or otherwise.

Since love of sugar and sweet foods is deeply ingrained in American culture, it may seem severe to suggest that sugar be cut out of your diet completely. But many people are doing so, in order to get more food value for their calories. A few grams of sugar might not kill you, but just don't get trapped into equating a bottle of soda with mother love, even in your subconscious.

The real problem in the economy is that it doesn't pay to invest. Investment is too low because the profit ratio is too low. What you have to do somehow is to stimulate the economy and raise the profit ratio. But it certainly cannot be done by raising interest rates to 13%, which is what the government is trying to do now.

5. PRESENT A SOLUTION: The conclusion may suggest solutions or remedies for the problem discussed in the essay. This conclusion also implies or states a plea for a change.
For example:

I have heard, I must admit, that there are some gifted, inspiring teachers who bring Shakespeare to life even for high school students, but they are the exception while the Miss Browns remain the rule. Therefore, I think Hamlet, Macbeth, and Julius Caesar should be eliminated from the high school curriculum. If this is done, the student can more profitably and more enjoyably spend his time on material that is less obtuse and oblique. In this way, he will not be taxed beyond his strength, patience, or ability, and in this way, Shakespeare himself will be saved from a fate and judgment he does not deserve.

I am committed to doing what I can to take guns away from the people. In my view, private ownership of handguns must be banished from this country. I am not asking for registration or licensing or outlawing cheap guns. I am saying that

no private citizen, whatever claim, should possess a handgun. Only police officers should.

We have to stop thinking about ourselves as an entire group of passengers on a "spaceship" called earth. We need to design cooperative programs to feed starving peoples, to provide universal medical care, and to find ways to preserve our natural resources. Everyone has to work together so that the planet will progress through our planning for the good of all.

6. **MAKE A PREDICTION:** A forecast or warning based on evidence developed in the paper may be an effective way to conclude the essay.
For example:

In education we have not yet acquired that kind of will. But we need to acquire it, and we have no time to lose. We must acquire it in this decade. For if, in the crucial years which are coming, our people remain as unprepared as they are for their responsibilities and their mission, they may not be equal to the challenge, and if they do not succeed, they may never have a second chance to try.

I think there's a warning in this somewhere for the more militant feminists among us. I suspect they should take a good look at life as we experience it today and compare it with what their mothers and grandmothers knew. Except in a few areas where change necessarily comes slowly, the event has already taken place or is moving inexorably in that direction, to become raucous and demanding, denigrating.

Checklist for the Concluding Paragraph

- ___ 1. Does the conclusion tie together all parts of the essay?
- ___ 2. Does the concluding paragraph reinforce the central idea?
- ___ 3. Does the concluding paragraph use the most effective method of development?
- ___ 4. Does it contain a transition which connects the conclusion to the preceding paragraph?
- ___ 5. Does the concluding paragraph avoid these common errors?
 - ___ A. Introducing any new ideas
 - ___ B. Using obvious expressions such as "In this essay, I have tried to..."
 - ___ C. Using clichés, overworked quotations, and banal and trite
 - ___ D. Apologizing
 - ___ E. Using absolute statements
 - ___ F. Drawing unrealistic conclusions
 - ___ G. Using overly long or overly short conclusions