

Ending a paper without a conclusion is like leaving without saying goodbye. Conclusions are important because they bring closure to the paper and leave your reader with a final message.

Conclusions appear at the very end of a paper or document. In shorter pieces, the conclusion is one final paragraph; in longer documents, a conclusion may be a final section that consists of more than one paragraph. In either case, conclusions should accomplish two major things:

1. Remind the reader of the main things about the topic that you would like the reader to remember.

Depending on your purpose and audience, this task can be accomplished in a variety of ways. In a paper with only a few main points, the writer will often restate each of the main points. In a paper with many points, the writer will restate the key points for the reader to remember. Keep in mind that *restate* does not mean to repeat the exact words from the thesis in the introduction. In most cases, it's best to give the reader some variety by wording your ideas in a different way.

2. Bring closure to the paper.

Using an effective transition as you begin your conclusion is especially important since it will help your reader realize that he or she has reached the final part of the paper. In addition, ending the paragraph with a powerful final thought can also help the reader understand that the paper is complete and can also leave the reader with a favorable impression of your entire paper.

The final thought itself does not have to be unique; it just needs to be worded with some creativity or “pizz-azz.” For example, if you were writing about your favorite hobbies, your final thought might be that your life would not complete without these activities. That is certainly not a unique thought, yet that common thought could work well for a closer if it were worded this way: *Indeed, hunting, fishing, and camping provide me with a taste of heaven right here on earth. Or, Reading, traveling, and role playing games all embroider my life, and they are not merely the trim of my life; they are the fabric of my existence.* This ending is particularly effective if there were references to sewing, quilting, needlework, etc. in the introduction and/or the body of the paper. This ending would bring the paper “full circle.” Regardless, when it comes to writing an effective closer, “It’s not what you say, but how you say it”!

For examples of effective closers, read some of the concluding paragraphs to the essays inside “WINK: An Online Journal” on this Online Writing Center web site.