

Conclusions

The role of the conclusion

Conclusions briefly summarize your argument and state why it is important. You can begin a conclusion by reminding the reader of your thesis and main points, but the conclusion is not merely a summary. Rather, it should draw out the significance of your topic and thesis.

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 can 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 we 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 “so what?”:** This is the central question your conclusion should answer. Why should readers care about your argument? What does it add to discussions about the topic? One way to generate ideas is to begin free-writing the conclusion 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?
- **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 may want to recommend a course of action to your readers.

Evaluating the conclusion

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

Additional resources

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

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