

Lecture 8: The Concluding Paragraph or Conclusion

The last paragraph of the essay is called the conclusion or the concluding paragraph. It is the exit of the essay and it is a very important paragraph because it is the last impression that the writer can leave to the reader and the last opportunity to tell your reader your message. Just as the introductory functions to open the essay discussion by introducing the topic and the central idea, so the concluding paragraph should wrap up all discussion. It should restate the main points discussed in a simplified manner and it ensures that the reader is left with a message to think about (a take home message). Your conclusion should end on a strong note: with a stylistic flourish; with a good advice, a strong point; or with a relevant quotation. However, it should never bring up new information or ideas.

Your conclusion should then accomplish three goals:

- **Remind your reader of your thesis statement** (restatement of the thesis statement).
- **Summarize the main ideas of your essay.**
- **Give your reader a take-home message.**

What is a take-home message?

It is the final thought and the most important message you would like for people to come away from your composition with. One way to come up with your take-home message is to ask yourself this question: *if I could choose only one thing for my reader to remember, take home, and share with others, what would it be?* This is the message (advice or solution) you want to include in your conclusion.

These are some tips for writing a take home message

- Spur the reader to action
- Suggest a course of action
- Generalize to a broader situation
- Make a prediction about the future
- Use a thoughtful quotation or anecdote

The following are examples of concluding paragraphs

➤ **Example One**

In short, Mr. Smith had several qualities of a great teacher. He was well informed about his subject, and his enthusiasm for it rubbed off on his students. Furthermore, his lectures were well organized, and he returned papers and tests promptly. His classes were always interesting, and he told funny stories to keep even the sleepiest student awake and engaged in learning. Mr. Smith taught more than just history; he also taught us to love learning.

- The transition phrase In short signals the end of the essay.
- It summarizes the qualities of Mr. Smith: he was well informed, enthusiastic, organized, and interesting.
- It gives a take home message: Mr. Smith motivated his students to love learning and, of course, it is how a teacher should be.

➤ **Example Two**

Remind your reader of your thesis statement. The writer restates her thesis statement here.

Summarize the ideas of your paper. The writer reminds the reader of the problems she discussed earlier, and reminds the reader that she was able to turn those situations around.

Summarize the main ideas of your paper. The writer refers to problems she has discussed earlier, and reminds the reader that she was able to turn those situations around.

Finally, I was able to overcome a number of obstacles during my year abroad. My trip could have easily been a disaster when confronted with any one of these problems.

➤ *It was not because I was able to make the experience enriching to myself as well as to many of the people I encountered. It was this experience that encouraged me to study Chinese and Russian and to live in Taiwan and Russia. It was also this experience that convinced me that I could do anything that I put my mind to.*

Give your reader a take-home message.

The writer makes a generalization about herself based on what she learned from her experience abroad.

Your concluding paragraph should be introduced with transition signals such as **in conclusion, in summary, in brief, in short, indeed, all in all.**