



OWLS Writing Guides: CONCLUSIONS

An essay's concluding paragraph, along with its introduction, acts as a frame for your discussion. The conclusion should do three essential things:

- ⇒ Refer to your main point
- ⇒ *Briefly* touch on the major support you've offered for the point
- ⇒ Finish with a final, forceful, and memorable observation about your topic

Here are some ways to fashion a good conclusion:

1. Use a framing device, referring back to the lead idea of your introduction, such as an opening question, anecdote, fact, or quotation. For example, if you opened your paper by asking a question about the topic, answer that question in light of what your essay has revealed about the topic.
2. Discuss the results or future implications of your topic. For example, if you are advocating for a particular course of action, explain (or reiterate) how it might impact relevant parties or the works at large.
3. Call for action on or a change of attitude about the topic or issue. Make a final, forceful pitch for your position, especially when you are arguing for action on a controversial issue.
4. Quote an authority on the topic. Find a reputable source whose words add force to your point.
5. Allude to a particular event or instance that relates to the topic. Apply your discussion to real-world events.

Here are a few examples illustrating some of these methods:

Example (demonstrates 2, 3):

Should we take into effect these measures of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adopting such environmentally-friendly fuel sources as biofuel and solar power, and encouraging environmental awareness, we may yet be able to slow down the continuing downward spiral that our Earth is experiencing. However, until the general populace wakes up from its global warming denial and recognizes that there is a problem, nothing will change and the terrible trend that we see now will continue.

Example (demonstrates 4):

Though the materials used for water bottles are generally recyclable, around 80% of bottled water bottles sold in the U.S. end up in landfills, resulting in only 20% being recycled. Worldwide, recycling rates are even lower, with near to 90% of bottles left not recycled. In 2006, the production of bottled water created more than 2.5 million tons of CO₂. Statistics like these show how the production of bottled water results in immense amounts of pollution, to the point where, as Peter Gleick, an expert on water policy and director at the Pacific Institute in Oakland, California stated, the energy expended in the production, transportation, marketing, and dealing with the waste is “like filling up a quarter of every bottle with oil.”

Example (demonstrates 5):

Dissociative identity disorder has become sensationalized and over diagnosed by overzealous psychiatrists to the point where it is becoming questionable as to whether or not it is an actual phenomenon. This is in part due to the media hype surrounding women such as Chris Costner-Sizemore and Shirley Ardell Mason and the subsequent books and films *The Three Faces of Eve* and *Sybil*. The true prevalence of DID will not be known until psychiatrists more rigorously apply the criteria from the DSM to their patients and suppress their own assumptions about a patient’s condition until it is otherwise proven.

Just as with introductions, there are a number of conclusion techniques to avoid:

1. Avoid the flat statement: “In conclusion...” It should not be necessary to announce your discussion is drawing to a close.
2. Don’t simply restate the introductory paragraph and thesis in different words.
3. Don’t shoot off in an entirely different and new direction: a conclusion should continue to develop the content of the essay, not raise issues that will make your reader wonder why you didn’t cover these in your paper.