

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CONCLUSION

What is the main point of your paper? What is the claim you made and what arguments did you use to back up your claim? What do you want your reader be thinking about after finishing your paper? These are questions that a conclusion in an argumentative paper should answer. The purpose of a conclusion is to reinforce your position and the arguments that you discussed in your paper, and to show your reader why he or she should care about your topic. A lot of students aren't quite sure what to include in a conclusion. These steps will help guide you:

Step 1: Transition

Use a transitional word or phrase at the beginning of your conclusion to make it clear to your reader that this isn't another body paragraph.

Examples:

In essence, ultimately, overall

Step 2: State the main point of your paper in a new way.

Don't just copy and paste the thesis statement word for word from your introduction into your conclusion.

Example:

The claim from an introduction: Freud believes that civilization makes mankind miserable, but being part of a civilization is actually worthwhile.

New way to state this claim: In essence, although civilization makes humans lose some individual happiness and freedom, these losses are insignificant compared to all of the benefits we receive from being a part of it.

Both sentences convey the same main point, but the rephrased sentence in the conclusion is more specific.

Step 3: Briefly discuss your arguments.

Provide a brief summary of the points you discussed in each body paragraph. It's important to remind your reader that you have strong arguments to back up the claim you made. Again, don't just repeat what you said in the introduction word for word; try to show your reader how the arguments are related to one another.

Example:

Arguments: 1) civilization helped early humans survive 2) civilization helps us control negative aspects of our nature 3) civilization encourages us to feel guilty when we do something wrong.

Discussion of arguments: The structure of civilization is actually responsible for the survival of the human species. Living in groups encouraged early humans to be compassionate; they warned each other danger and protected one another. As humans helped one another they begin to move away from their more aggressive tendencies. Now, if we ever revert back to these aggressive tendencies, we feel guilty because the civilization we live in does not condone that behavior.

Quick Tip:

Don't bring up a new argument in your conclusion! If you think of another good idea as you're writing, incorporate it into the body of the paper instead.

Step 4: Make your reader care.

Your last sentence or two should make the reader understand why you've spent so much time trying to persuade him/her that your claim is true. Why do you care about your thesis? Why should the reader listen to what you've said? There are many different ways to go about this.

1. Show your reader why your topic is a high stakes issue. Why would it be a problem for your reader to ignore what you're saying?

Example:

Overall, civilization can be seen as a necessary evil; although it limits us in certain ways, without it, the human race would never be able to survive.

- This statement makes it clear that maintaining civilizations is really important because it's a life and death matter for the human race.
2. Convince the reader to actually do something (or not to do something).

Example:

Thus, civilizations must not be condemned; we should preserve the current structure of society at all costs.

- This statement tells the reader not to think of civilizations as something bad, and it also tells the reader not to disband civilizations.
3. For CIE Papers: address any of the three big CIE questions if relevant

Example:

An important part of being human is a desire for companionship, so we should not disband civilizations because that would go against human nature.

- This statement answers the question, "What does it mean to be human?"

Step 5: Put all these parts together, and you have your conclusion.

Example:

In essence, although civilization makes humans lose some individual happiness and freedom, these losses are insignificant compared to all of the benefits we receive from being a part of it. The structure of civilization is actually responsible for the survival of the human species. Living in groups encouraged early humans to be compassionate; they warned each other danger and protected one another. As humans helped one another they begin to move away from their more aggressive tendencies. Now, if we ever revert back to these aggressive tendencies, we feel guilty because the civilization we live in does not condone that behavior. Thus, civilization can be seen as a necessary evil; although it limits us in certain ways, without it, the human race would never be able to survive.