**Four Strategies For Constructing A Strong Conclusion**

1. **Restate the thesis statement.** This is the most common way that writers conclude their essays, and the most easily abused technique. Simply restating the thesis is useful as a reminder to the reader, but it can be a very unimaginative device. Be sure not to restate your thesis in exactly the same words. Figure out a way to provide some amplification or a twist that will keep the reader interested.
2. **Shine some new light on the subject.** A strong conclusion provides the reader with some new understanding of your subject. Your essay should lead the reader along a path that winds through a subject area and arrives at a new conclusion. It might be helpful to think of your conclusion as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—the gift that the reader will receive for making the journey with you to your concluding argument.
3. **Stay on target.** Many writers, in their panic at the end of the writing project, tend to stray off subject and conclude by opening up a new if related subject for discussion. Avoid this trap. Be sure that your conclusion is an extension of your original thesis, and that you do not conclude by suggesting some other topic.
4. **Get the reader involved.** An effective way to conclude many essays is to appeal to the reader's emotions. With the use of specific details, you can encourage the reader to make personal associations with your argument and feel the same emotions that you feel about your subject. Another way to get the reader involved is to challenge the reader to consider your argument directly; alternatively, be daring and challenge the reader to dispute an argument you've made very strongly.

**Six More Ways To Write A Strong Conclusion**

The right way to write a conclusion is to find the strongest, most effective strategy for convincing your reader to accept your point of view. Challenge yourself to be creative and imaginative in the way you construct your conclusion. Be sure to leave enough time (and energy) at the end of your project for the creation of a clever ending.

Here are six suggestions for strategies to adopt in creating effective conclusions. Note that they are similar, but not always identical to strategies you learned in the previous lesson for writing strong introductions.

1. **Ask a question.** A well-constructed essay can often lead to a dramatic question at the end that challenges the reader in effect to contribute to the essay's argument. Imagine that you are writing an essay about the value of standardized tests. The following question might introduce your concluding paragraph and invite the reader to agree with the answer you will then provide to the question: "Can we be sure then, at the very least, that these standardized tests are providing valuable information?"
2. **Quote an authority on your subject.** Here's a quotation from an authority on standardized testing that might be used to support a thesis, or perhaps even to provide a contrasting point of view: "In the February 2007 issue of Science magazine, researchers Nathan R. Kuncel and Sarah A. Hezlett of the University of Minnesota conclude that: 'Standardized admissions tests are valid predictors of many aspects of student success across academic and applied fields.' " Finding an appropriate and relevant quotation might be difficult, but is often an effective strategy for a conclusion. Be aware that you don't have to find a quotation that agrees with you. Maybe a quotation from the opposition will provide a way for you to contradict a known authority and make a strong case for your side of the argument.
3. **Provide a relevant anecdote.** Anecdotes are easier to use in introductions, as scene setters, than as strategies for conclusion. However, if you can save the best for the last, your personal experience (or someone else's) might provide a strong punch at the end of your essay. The experience of 150 seventh-graders at Centreville Middle School who took the standardized test in English usage is instructive: While 80% of the students were above average students in their class work, only 56% passed the standardized test. Perhaps most damning of all, 53% of the students got lower grades in subsequent months. School administrators attributed this decline in study habits and class attendance to the dramatically lowered morale among the students. Obviously, this anecdote would work best for an essay critical of the use of standardized tests. Be cautious in choosing an anecdote. Make sure it is not too specific to provide support for your generalized thesis statement.
4. **Offer a solution or a recommendation.** Depending on your subject matter, providing a workable and realistic solution may be a difficult challenge. In the case of the assigned essay on the value of standardized testing, one student worked around the difficulty of solving this problem in the following way: "Whether or not standardized tests will continue to be part of national policy is at this time unknowable. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that local schools need to enhance their commitment to building writing skills among their students. Without better preparation, students will be ill prepared to succeed in their future lives, much less in the taking of standardized tests." Note that this conclusion sidesteps the challenge of offering a solution or alternative to the use of standardized testing by concluding that there is a larger, more important issue at stake. This is clever writing and provides the reader with a loftier subject to contemplate.
5. **Challenge the reader to action.** In persuasive essays, the use of a call to action is often an effective way to conclude. You must use this strategy carefully, because demanding a specific action of your reader may sound hollow and unrealistic. Write your congressperson is an overworked example of this strategy. One of the students writing about standardized testing offered this conclusion: "Complaining about the use of standardized tests doesn't get anybody anywhere. These tests are here to stay. The energy that students (and their teachers) devote to criticizing the testing policies would be better spent figuring out ways to beat the tests and perform brilliantly on them. That'll show those test writers!"
6. **Make a prediction.** How confident do you feel that you can solve the world's problems? Probably your answer is, "Not very confident." If so, you'll want to be cautious about using this strategy, but three cheers for you if you can find a way to guide your reader to look to the future. Here's what one student suggested: Twenty years from now, we'll all look back on the controversy about the use of standardized tests and laugh. The real problem facing schools by then is going to be what to do with the multiple languages our students will be speaking. With the increasing presence of recent immigrants in our schools, schools are going to find that 40% of their students are not native English speakers. Printing standardized tests in many languages will be the least of our problems!

**Dos And Don'ts In Writing A Conclusion**

1. Do consider carefully the goals you seek for your conclusion, and match those goals with one or more of the six strategies presented in this lesson.
2. If you get stuck, take a walk around the block, or sleep on it, and return to the essay the next day to write the conclusion. A little perspective always helps.
3. Do not begin your conclusion with clichèd and trite phrases such as these:
   * in conclusion
   * to summarize
   * I conclude by
   * and so we see that
4. Do not repeat your thesis in exact words. Expand on it imaginatively