Conclusion paragraphs are difficult because they come at the end of the essay. By this time, it’s probably late at night, writers are tired of writing, and they just want to finish. It is also the paragraph that has the least amount of revision because it’s the last paragraph written. Often there is no time to revise it before submitting the essay.

Nonetheless, there are some strategies to write effective conclusions. The conclusion should provide a finished, satisfying feeling to the essay. It should be thoughtful and reflective, perhaps even witty or funny. It should retain the same energy and confidence that the rest of the essay displays.

Here are some tips.

- Don’t preach or lecture the reader. Avoid sermonizing. It’s overly simplistic to conclude an essay about media’s effect on people’s body image by saying that people should just be happy with their bodies and not be influenced by the media. *Generally avoid “should” in the conclusion.*

- Don’t tell the reader what you covered in the essay. There is no need to say “I have shown you all the ways that the media influences society” or “I have proven what a problem this is.”

- Don’t merely repeat the points in the thesis and describe them. Avoid saying “In conclusion, these are the three ways that the media influences society.” These are stock, superficial, empty conclusions that offer nothing satisfying for the reader to consider about your topic.

Each kind of essay lends itself to a different kind of conclusion. A problem/solution essay might call the reader to action in the conclusion and inspire them to get involved. A cause/effect conclusion might predict what could happen in the future if the effects are not reversed. Speculating on a potential result may be effective. An argument essay might reflect on human nature, power structures in society, or the ethical implications of the topic. Be thoughtful, observant, and reflective in the conclusion. Consider the implications of your research and analysis to the reader. Answer the question “So what?”

- Refer back to the key points you made in the essay as a springboard to thoughtfully consider the implications of your research.

**Conclusion Hooks:**

Try using some of the same techniques that you use in your introduction to begin your introduction.

- Restate the same rhetorical question that began your essay or use a different one.
- Begin with a relevant proverb or quotation from popular culture or literature.
- Refer back to the story that hooked your reader in the introduction.
- Create a metaphor or analogy that illustrates the essence of the issue.
- Begin with a quotation from an expert who is knowledgeable in the field.
A well-developed introduction paragraph should be at least 6-8 sentences in length and include the following components:

- hook
- general background information
- thesis

I. HOOK

Start the essay with a catchy “hook” to engage the reader.

A hook is like an appetizer that whets the appetite of the reader for the main course. Be clever or interesting. Don’t start the essay with the thesis. The following are strategies for starting the essay in an engaging way.

1. **Description**: Vividly describe a scene with sense details (sight, sound, smell). Create a vivid image like a quick snapshot of people, places or things relevant to your topic.

2. **Narration**: Tell a brief story or anecdote, like a 3-4 sentence news clip or a short personal experience. Rather than a snapshot, narration is more like a short video relevant to your topic.

3. **Rhetorical Question**: Ask 1-2 thought-provoking questions of your reader that relate to your thesis. Make sure the questions are not easily answered by a yes or no.

4. **Quotation**: Locate a quote from an expert in the field you are discussing. Find a relevant proverb or quote from a literary source such as Shakespeare or even from a popular advertisement.

5. **Startling Information**: Give facts or statistics that might seem unusual or dramatic to your reader. Or give graphic examples that cause an emotional response about your topic.

6. **Definition**: Define some important concept of your topic or a significant word related to your topic. Explain what the word really means or how the term is misunderstood.

7. **Compare/Contrast**: Compare or contrast your topic to something your reader would be familiar with. Perhaps use a metaphor to make the comparison which supports your thesis.

8. **Reversal**: Begin by pretending to support the opposite side of your thesis, perhaps even exaggerating the position. Then use a transition to return to the actual position of your thesis.

9. **Combination**: Focus on one introductory method to get started, and add other strategies that seem to work well together to present your topic.

II. BACKGROUND

Add “Background Information” linking the hook to the thesis. Give the reader some general background or a brief overview of the topic. This might include a brief history of the problem or controversy, some recent events which make the topic timely or urgent, or some general facts or statistics that provide the readers with a base level of knowledge about the topic so they can proceed with your analysis. Sentences must logically lead to thesis. Use an appropriate transition to achieve a smooth flow and avoid an abrupt shift to thesis.

III. THESIS

End with the thesis. The thesis is the claim or the assertion that you are presenting in your essay and is generally stated at the end of the introduction. It should be a complete sentence that asserts an opinion. It should not be a fact or question.