

Rubric Category	Organization
Grade/Score	Grades 6-12 / Scores 2 and 3
CCSS Writing Standards	W1, W1e
Argument Type	All arguments

Compelling Conclusions: How to Be Inspired When You're Tired

Students will practice crafting effective conclusions by understanding their purpose and the writing strategies available.

Understanding the Expectations

A strong essay does more than simply “end”—you never want your writing to just come to an abrupt stop. That’s why we use conclusions—conclusions wrap up what you have been discussing in your paper and give it a “finished” feel. After moving from general to specific information in the introduction and body paragraphs, your conclusion should begin pulling ideas back into more general information that drives home the main points of your argument. Typically, you should not be introducing new evidence or arguments in the final paragraph.

Effective conclusions do several things for the reader:

- Prompt the reader to recall your claim or thesis. Answer the question, “So what?” Why was this written discussion worth the reader’s time?
- Offer closure through varied approaches, whether reflective, philosophical, humorous, or clever.
- Make a solid, memorable final impression or otherwise make the reader feel that they benefitted from reading your paper.
- In some papers, conclusions may also call for action—passing a new rule, funding further research, or performing a certain behavior, for example.

There are many ways to accomplish these goals—you’ve probably even been given certain formulas to follow in the past. In the interest of developing new and more interesting conclusions, consider some of the following strategies for approaching conclusions:

1. You can **call back to the introduction** in a specific way. For example, if the introduction to your argument focused on a specific person or example, you might discuss that person or example again in the conclusion, incorporating some of the ideas of your argument. Maybe you had a strong attention-getter at the beginning that you can revisit at the end. If you told the story of a dramatic accident in your introduction to a paper about driving laws, your conclusion might include something like, “It’s impossible to say with any certainty, but if these traffic laws had been put in place years ago, Melinda might never have been in that accident.” This can also sometimes work with any quotations used in the introduction.
2. Focus on **addressing opposing viewpoints**. If you haven’t yet responded to other possible claims about this topic, the conclusion is one opportunity for you to do so. Or, even if you have responded to counterclaims more fully in your writing, the conclusion is one place where you can concede any further points and emphasize the strength of your argument in response.
3. **Synthesize the different points of the argument** in a clearer whole. Many students have been told to summarize their argument in the conclusion, but this often leads to a boring paragraph that tells the reader the same things he or she just read in the rest of the paper. Don’t simply repeat your evidence once more. Instead, use the conclusion as a place to “connect the dots” if you’ve made a complex argument, reinforcing

how one subclaim supports the next and so on. Or, consider whether the argument you've made has further implications. You've been focused on proving your specific claim, but if your claim is true, what else might that affect?

Trying it Out

Using a work in progress or a paper you are revising, draft or rewrite your conclusion using at least one of the strategies discussed above:

1. You can **call back to the introduction** in a specific way.
2. You may focus on **addressing opposing viewpoints** or concede any necessary points and reemphasize the strength of your response.
3. You might **synthesize the different points of your argument** in a clearer whole. Be careful to do *more* than just repeat yourself!

After you've written or rewritten your conclusion, run through the checklist below to see if your conclusion does each of the following:

- Does your conclusion return to the idea of your claim or thesis, making it clear for the reader once again?
- Does your conclusion offer a sense of closure or ending?
- Does your conclusion leave a strong final impression or call for action?

Share your work with a peer editor. Exchange feedback.

Writing it Up

Whether you are pleased or not with your draft of your conclusion, reconsider other possibilities for it from the lesson to make sure you are moving in the most effective direction. Brainstorm more than one possibility. It is always good to draft out more than one conclusion. Seek feedback from a peer editor or your teacher.