

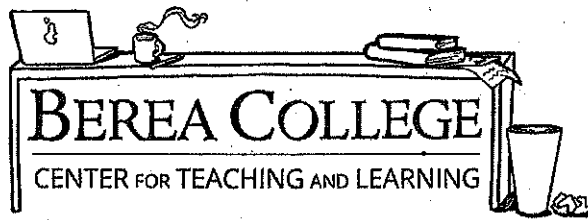
Conclusions

(Alternatively, the part you dread at the end of your essay)

- “Aren’t conclusions just summarizing your paper and restating your thesis?”
 - Nope! Conclusions are like the final statement of an argument -- they need to leave the reader with a clear idea of why they bothered reading your essay. If you just restate your thesis and summarize your paper, you haven’t given the reader anything new to think about, nor left them with any lasting impressions.

- “What is a conclusion supposed to do...?”
 - For a basic argumentative or research-based essay, a conclusion is meant to remind the audience what you wrote about and help them see its importance. Here are a couple of things you can help the reader do:
 - View the topic in a greater context. E.g., if you were writing about gender roles in 16th century England, you could pull your focus back a bit and explain how your interpretation of the gender roles fits into the overall narrative of gender roles throughout history.
 - Give the audience a call to action. If you were writing about the ethical violations of sweatshops, you could conclude by explaining how the audience can participate and make a difference.

- “Am I not supposed to summarize my topic at all?”
 - For larger papers (e.g. a paper longer than 2-3 pages), especially research based papers, a summary is often necessary. By the time someone’s read ten pages worth of content, there’s a good chance they’ve forgotten what was on the first.
 - Keep your summaries as brief and concise as possible, and follow them up with a greater explanation about *why* what you wrote about mattered.



- “So does a good conclusion look like?”

Here’s a short example from a two-page argumentative essay written on William Frost, one of Berea College’s more controversial figures.

1) First sentence

Doesn't restate thesis, is this a short paper.

2 Second sentence

repeats relevant information but does not introduce anything new.

Frost betrayed the ideals of the original college and its founders by pushing for segregation at Berea, focusing on white Appalachia and exiling black students to a vocational school after the Day Law was passed. ^① Although the school reintegrated immediately after an amendment to the Day Law in 1950 (115), the commitments were far different than they were almost a hundred years ago. ^② Frost forever shifted the focus of Berea from interracial education to needy Appalachian students, creating a schism that is still argued over to this day. ^③ Final sentence pulls away from restating & gives wider context and importance.

Things to Avoid

- Trying to make it seem like your argument is the be-all end-all.
 - In a paper about drunk driving, don’t finish by claiming that if people follow what you’re arguing for, drunk driving would never be a problem and everything would get better.
- Bringing in new information at the very end.
 - In a paper analyzing a piece of art and its related artist, don’t mention artists operating in the same field or similar pieces of art at the very end. If it’s an important point, include it in the body, not the conclusion.
- Just ending your paper instead of concluding it.
 - Leaving out a conclusion would make it seem like your argument didn’t matter and leave the reader unsatisfied.
 - If your readers are still with you through the end, they want to know what you think about the issue; avoid concluding with someone else’s thoughts whenever possible.