

College Writing: Writing the Conclusion

We've written an arguable thesis and supported it with appropriate, factual evidence. Now we need to write a conclusion. In many ways, the concluding paragraph is the most important paragraph in your paper—and it's also often the most difficult paragraph to write.

Let's continue with our model of thinking of your paper as a court case—you've supported your thesis with solid facts so that the reader has no choice but to accept your argument as a possible option, even if the reader hasn't necessarily agreed with what you've said. In the conclusion, you must show how all the points fit together, and how they work together to support your argument. Remember that good attorneys never present new evidence in their summation to the jury. You should follow their example and avoid presenting any new information. You want to sound confident that you've proven your case.

Most of all, your conclusion should be short and to the point. You want to conclude your argument without closing the possibility that your reader will want to continue discussing your idea after he or she has finished reading.

Before you start to write

- Think about how all the pieces of evidence you've supplied fit together
- Think about what course of action you think the reader should pursue
- Help the reader to see the broader implications of your argument
- Tie the information together so that your argument seems simple

You can conclude your paper by doing one or more of the following:

- Echo the first paragraph of the paper to draw your reader's attention back to the initial argument
- Show your reader what's been gained through your exploration of your topic
- Discuss the implications or consequences of your argument, particularly if the reader doesn't act
- Suggest an action the reader could or should take
- Redefine the key points of your thesis
- Conclude with a quote that underscores your main point
- Conclude with an image that helps your reader visualize your main point

Here's a sample concluding paragraph for our essay on the dangers of texting while driving:

Texting while driving is dangerous, as proven by a variety of scientific testing performed by *Car and Driver* magazine, MSN Autos, and the popular TV show "Mythbusters." Numerous ad campaigns by AT&T and Oprah Winfrey have brought the problem to the public's attention. Recently, many churches across the nation have posted the following message on their street signs: "Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him." While people's religious beliefs vary widely, the reality is that texting while driving is dangerous, and could, in fact, be fatal. We must do everything we can to support legislation that makes texting while driving illegal. The life you save may be your own.

The first two sentences of this sample conclusion draw our reader's attention back to the thesis by restating it and including some of the supporting evidence.

Texting while driving is dangerous, as proven by a variety of scientific testing performed by *Car and Driver* magazine, MSN Autos, and the popular TV show "Mythbusters." Numerous ad campaigns by AT&T and Oprah Winfrey have brought the problem to the public's attention.

The third sentence includes a quote that underscores our point without bringing in any new evidence.

Recently, many churches across the nation have posted the following message their street signs: "Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him."

The last three sentences underscore our point and ask the reader to take an action. The last sentence in particular is an appeal to the reader to do something.

While people's religious beliefs vary widely, the reality is that texting while driving is dangerous, and could, in fact, be fatal. We must do everything we can to support legislation that makes texting while driving illegal. The life you save may be your own.

