THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

Explanation

As a student writer, you may find it nearly as difficult to end a paper as to begin it. This need not be the case. After all, unlike the playwright scriptwriter, you need not worry about achieving an effect in your concluding paragraph. You need only be concerned with making your point, clearly and logically. You will want to convince your reader that you are serious, that you know what you have been talking about.

How is this to be accomplished? First, consider some specific things best avoided:

1. Don’t just stop. How is the reader to know that you’ve finished.
2. Don’t bring up new point. Points belong to the body of your paper.
3. Don’t end with an apology. The reader will suspect you don’t know your subject.

How then should you end your paper? End your paper as most writers of expository essays do: with a summary conclusion. A summary conclusion goes back over the main ideas made in the body and restates the thesis. A summary conclusion ties your main points and delivers a sense of completion. A conclusion need not be lengthy, probably fewer than 75 words. Two or three sentences may be sufficient when your paper is but two or three pages long. Whatever the length of your final paragraph, remember to keep the reader’s attention on the thesis statement. You might wish to signal as much by the use of a word or phrase like finally, in short, in sum, therefore, etc.

You have other options concluding your essay. Rather than summarize, you can direct reader to new considerations, further implications, possible solutions, even end with a call for action. Some writers find an effective ending by asking a question or using a quotation.

Examples

The following examples of concluding paragraph from student essay may help you to recognize the range of possibilities.

1. (Summary)
   I believe any number of factors should be taken into account by the automobile purchaser when deciding on the transmission options available to him. One who buys an automatic transmission should consider the greater initial cost, the added cost that comes from fewer miles per gallon, and lesser control one has over the vehicle under adverse driving conditions. An automatic transmission comes as certainly no bargain when viewed in the light of the facts I have brought out here.
2. (New consideration)
One doesn’t have to be a serious student of the dance or a devotee of the ballet to benefit from the personal challenge of learning the intricacies of the discipline. With the discovery of unknown muscles, one learns the joy of maintaining fit and flexible body, a discipline which lingers to enhance a lifetime.

3. (Summary plus Further implications)
Characteristically, the “low riders” are cynical of the established social institutions. They dangerously set themselves apart from society during a time when young people should be learning to identify with adult roles. Unless they are somehow convinced that those who avail themselves more are more likely to succeed, they are apt to get lost in a rapidly changing world.

4. (Call for Action)
In every area of our country we are exploiting and destroying our natural resources. The greed of a few combined with the apathy of the silent majority will create imbalance in the nature that can never be rectified. We must take action now to control our mania for growth to see that no other wilderness area will vanish.

5. (Summary)
While contemporary Cubists artists’ incongruous styles show the shit of trends not only in art in the twentieth but also in the world, Picasso remains a giant of his time. His boldness, his freedom to experiment with forms, his daring abstractions, and his uninhibited expression coupled with precise constructions make him a true representative of modern Cubism.

6. (Summary plus Further Implications)
In such fashion the great tobacco industry maintains itself and our habit, resting upon a crude form of psychology that associates a noxious weed with youth, sex, and masculine superiority as well as female independence. Whatever the method of advertising, the fight is now on between the American Cancer Society, which is drawing some scientific parallels between smoking and a deadly disease, and the tobacco industry whose parallel is between smoke in your lungs and the “good life.”

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