

## Writing a Conclusion

Here you can learn about

- **what to include in the conclusion section of an academic paper.**

An associated worksheet is available.

### The Conclusion

The word *conclusion* means both to sum up something and to come to a judgment. The conclusion to your paper should include both. In the conclusion, you will generally be expected to do the following:

- a) Restate hypothesis/hypotheses
- b) Summarize findings
- c) Evaluate findings
- d) Discuss implications
- e) Consider findings within the larger research area
- f) Indicate limitations
- g) Refer to possible future work
- h) Leave a final message.

Readers' expectations about the length of a conclusion will differ depending on the journal. Check the length of the conclusions in the journal you are writing for. There may be no conclusion; sometimes the information from this section is included in the discussion section.

**For a), b), and c)** – Restating hypotheses, summarizing, and evaluating findings

This information has already been provided in your paper, and you are simply summarizing what you have previously stated. Rather than using copy/paste, you should rephrase the information. You should not be providing your reader with any new information here.

**For d) and e)** – Discussing implications, considering findings within larger research area

You may already have provided this information in the discussion section of your paper. If so, it should be summarized and repeated here using different wording. With d), consider how the results of your work could be

important for others. With e), look at the bigger issue: how your small contribution to understanding something links with wider questions. These considerations are particularly important in papers for practitioners/policy makers.

**Tip:**

It is often also possible to write f) and g) in the discussion section of your paper and thus move it away from your conclusion.

## For f) and g) – Indicating limitations and referring to possible future work

Although this information is present in many conclusions, it is rhetorically not always good to finish with these elements. Readers will tend to remember what is at the end of your paper, and these two elements signify what has not been achieved. If limitations and future work are the main message of your paper, then finish with f) and g). If not, then make sure you finish with h) – your final message (what you want people to remember).

## For h) – Leaving a final message

Before you start writing, you should consider the one thing you want your reader to remember from the paper. Consider leaving this message at the end of your paper, where it is most likely to be remembered.

## Useful Resources

Glasman-Deal, H. 2009. *Science Research Writing for Non-native Speakers of English*. London, Imperial College Press.

Turabian, K.L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, University of Chicago.

## Final Comments/Tips

- Basically, the conclusion should tell your readers
  - what you did,
  - what you found
  - why it's important.

It can also tell your reader what else still needs to be done.

- Put some effort into writing your conclusion clearly and use it to make an impact. It is the section that many go to straight after having read the abstract, and sometimes the only section they read. From it, your readers should gain an impression of how easy and/or useful it will be to read the rest of your paper.

