**Conclusion Do’s and Don’t’s**

**What to include**

* Your conclusion wraps up your essay in a tidy package and brings it home for your reader
* Your topic sentence should summarize what you said in your thesis statement
  + This suggests to your reader that you have accomplished what you set out to accomplish
* Do not simply restate your thesis statement, as that would be redundant
  + Rephrase the thesis statement with fresh and deeper understanding
* Your conclusion is no place to bring up new ideas
* Your supporting sentences should summarize what you have already said in the body of your essay
  + If a brilliant idea tries to sneak into the final paragraph, you must pluck it out and let it have its own paragraph in the body, or leave it out completely
* Your topic for each body paragraph should be summarized in the conclusion
  + Wrap up the main points
* Your closing sentence should help the reader feel a sense of closure
* Your closing sentence is your last word on the subject; it is your “clincher”
  + Demonstrate the importance of your ideas
  + Propel your reader to a new view of the subject
  + End on a positive note
* Your closing sentence should make your readers glad they read your paper

**Strategies for an effective conclusion**

* Play the “So What” Game.
  + When you read a statement from the conclusion, ask yourself, “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?”
  + Ponder that question and answer it
    - Basically, I’m just saying that education was important to Douglass
    - So what?
    - Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen
    - Why should anybody care?
    - That’s important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.
* Return to the theme or themes in the introduction
  + This brings the reader full circle
  + If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding
  + Refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words, or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction
* Summarize
  + Include a brief summary of the paper’s main points, but don’t simply repeat things that were in the paper
* Pull it all together
  + Show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together
* Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for the paper
* Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study
* Point to broader implications
  + A paper about the style of writer, Virginia Woolf, could point to her influence on other writers or later feminists

**Concluding strategies that do not work**

* Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase
* These may work in speeches, but they come across as wooden and trite in writing
  + “in conclusion”
  + “in summary”
  + “in closing”
  + “as shown in the essay”
* Stating the thesis for the very first time
* Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion
* Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of the paper
* Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper

**Ineffective conclusions**

* “That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It”
  + Restates the thesis and is usually painfully short
  + Does not push ideas forward
  + Written when the writer can’t think of anything else to say
  + Example
    - In conclusion, Frederick Douglass was, as we have seen, a pioneer in American education, proving that education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.
* “Sherlock Holmes”
  + State the thesis for the first time in the conclusion
  + Writer thinks it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in suspense and then “wow” them with the main idea, as in a Sherlock Holmes mystery
  + Readers want an analytical discussion of the topic in academic style, with the thesis statement up front
* “America the Beautiful”
  + Draws on emotion to make its appeal
  + Out of character with the rest of the paper
* “Grab Bag”
  + Includes extra information thought of or found but couldn’t integrate into the main body
  + Creates confusion for the reader

**Conclusion outline**

* Topic sentence
  + Fresh rephrasing of thesis statement
* Supporting sentences
  + Summarize or wrap up the main points in the body of the essay
  + Explain how ideas fit together
* Closing sentence
  + Final words
  + Connects back to the introduction
  + Provides a sense of closure