**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