

9 The Concluding Paragraph

The last paragraph of your essay is, of course, the concluding paragraph. This paragraph has a very important function in your essay. It is the last paragraph that your reader is going to read, so naturally you want to leave your reader with a clear understanding of what the point of your essay is. As with concluding sentences, a concluding paragraph can do this in one of two ways.

A. SUMMARY-TYPE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS

The first way is to summarize the main points in your essay. You want to remind the reader of each of the ideas that were brought up in your supporting paragraphs. Look at this model essay about New Orleans. Notice the concluding paragraph.

New Orleans: A Unique American City

The United States has many famous cities. In the east, there is New York. With its five boroughs, or parts, it is the largest city in the country. Chicago is the Midwest's largest city and is the center of most forms of transport: road, rail and air. San Francisco and Los Angeles are the big centers of the west. The southern part of the U.S., too, has a business and cultural center in New Orleans. New Orleans is perhaps the most distinctive and interesting city in the U.S.

The people of New Orleans are of a unique mixture of backgrounds. The main group is called Creole. Creole people are pure descendants of French and Spanish settlers. The Cajuns are also French, but they came to New Orleans originally from Canada. Since New Orleans was a slave center before the Civil War, one third of the population is black. Other immigrant groups include Germans, Italians, and Latin Americans. All of these groups make up the distinctive population of New Orleans.

There are some very famous places in New Orleans. New Orleans is perhaps best known as the birthplace of jazz. Preservation Hall on Bourbon Street in the Vieux Carré is famous a gathering place for jazz musicians. The Vieux Carré is also called the French Quarter and is the oldest part of the city. The center of the French Quarter is Jackson Square, which is named for the seventh president of the U.S. and which has a prominent statue of this president. The French Market is an old farmers' market and is still in use today. In short, there are many fascinating places to see in New Orleans.

There are two celebrations in New Orleans each year which draw people from all over the country. The first is Mardi Gras. This is a carnival which takes

place before the Christian period of fasting called Lent. On the last day of Mardi Gras, which is also called Fat Tuesday, people dress up in costumes and march in parades or just go to various places to listen to music. It is generally a time for people to go crazy. The second event is called the Spring Fiesta. This celebration is less crazy. It consists of candlelight tours of some of the older and more famous houses in the French Quarter. If you visit New Orleans, you should try to visit during one of these two celebrations.

All in all, New Orleans should definitely be counted as one of the great cities in the United States. Its people are a diverse mixture of many ethnic groups, the Vieux Carré has many interesting sights, and Mardi Gras and the Spring Fiesta, while very different, offer unique celebrations. For all these reasons, New Orleans is a city that highlights the southern part of the United States.

As you can see, the concluding paragraph in this essay mentions each of the main ideas brought out in each of the supporting paragraphs of the essay. This is a summary and one of the ways of writing a concluding paragraph.

B. RESTATEMENT/FINAL COMMENT-TYPE PARAGRAPHS

A second common way of writing a concluding paragraph is to restate the idea of your thesis statement and make your final comment on the subject. Here is an alternate concluding paragraph for the essay on New Orleans. Note how it differs from the summary-type of concluding paragraph.

In conclusion, New Orleans is an important city in the United States, and people should consider it as such. It has a unique atmosphere for business, entertaining or just looking around. Its fascinating combination of old world and new world will make anyone fall in love with it.

The ideas in the thesis statement are repeated in this concluding paragraph.

It is important to notice one point about both kinds of concluding paragraphs. Neither of them bring up new information about the topic of the essay. New information should go in another body paragraph, not in a concluding paragraph.

Exercise 1

Here is an essay about Woody Allen, a famous and funny American who, as you will see, has had many different jobs in the entertainment industry. This essay does not have a concluding paragraph. Read the three choices of concluding paragraphs which follow the essay and choose the best one. Be prepared to explain your answer.

The Many Hats of Woody Allen

America would not be the same without Woody Allen and certainly American humor would not be. Allen has become famous as the neurotic New Yorker who always finds the worst—and the funniest—side of life. He has been tickling the American funny bone for over 25 years. In addition, he has been doing it under many different job titles.

Early in his career, Allen was a “behind the scenes” man. He wrote jokes and ideas for other people to perform. He worked for NBC radio and television performers. Some of the early TV shows in the 1950’s, such as Sid Caesar and Garry Moore, had Woody Allen jokes in them. Even though he wasn’t a performer, he was gaining valuable experience.

In the early 1960’s, while maintaining his writing, Allen became a performer. At first, he was a stand-up comedian. He played to small and large audiences and was even on “The Tonight Show.” Later on, he began writing plays and then being an actor in them. One of his most famous plays was *Play It Again, Sam*, which was a neurotic’s funny look at Humphrey Bogart’s effect on his life. He also began acting in films. In most of these, he was a writer as well as an actor.

In the 1970’s, Allen found that he liked another job—directing people in movies. Of course, he never stopped writing or performing. He just added one more job to the overall project of making a movie. One of the most famous movies in which he wrote the screenplay, acted in the lead role and directed was *Annie Hall*. This movie won an Oscar as the best movie of 1977, and Allen won in the same year as best director. He had, indeed, become a success at three different jobs.

- a. In conclusion, Woody Allen has been successful and funny at many jobs. He has been a writer for himself and others. He has been a stand-up comedian and an accomplished actor both on stage and in films. One can only wonder about what job Woody Allen will make us laugh with next.
- b. In short, Woody Allen is a man of many talents. He can even play the clarinet. He does this every Monday night in a small jazz club in New York. He can also make us laugh by being a writer, actor and director. Americans are lucky to have Woody Allen.
- c. All in all, Americans are lucky to have Woody Allen. For more than a quarter of a century, he has been making us laugh by doing what he does best in each of the many jobs he has had. Long live Woody Allen and his sense of humor!

Exercise 2

Here is another essay which does not have a concluding paragraph. Write two concluding paragraphs to this essay in the space provided. Make one a summary-type conclusion and the other a restatement/final comment-type of conclusion.

Music, Music Everywhere

As you pull up to a stoplight, you can hear loud music coming from the car next to you. On a street corner, a group of people are gathered around a flute player listening to every song he plays. In a supermarket, shoppers sing along with the muzak in the background. Music is everywhere. In many ways, it is extremely important in people's lives.

People need music in order to relax. After working a long, hard day, people come home upset, tense and at war with the world. All they need to do, however, is to put on some soothing music, and they can't help but become calm. Many relaxing activities, such as lying on a beach or next to a swimming pool, are made more relaxing with music. People even use music to get them into that extreme state of relaxation, sleep.

In addition to needing music for relaxation, music is also necessary for enjoyment. People go to discos and bars every night just to have a good time dancing to their favorite music. Other people get enjoyment from music in more passive ways; they listen to their favorite music at a concert or on the radio or stereo. Still others find pleasure in producing music. These people play musical instruments. In short, people enjoy music in many ways.

The third way in which music is important in people's lives is in bringing them together. People rally around causes or institutions and can identify these causes and institutions by the music that surrounds them. For example, most people are in some way moved to feelings of patriotism upon hearing their national anthem. Many wars have been fought with the aid of a song that can bring soldiers and nations together, assuring their victory. People can even show allegiance to a certain political or social cause by buying and enjoying a particular recording. Music brings people together.

a. SUMMARY-TYPE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

b. RESTATEMENT/FINAL COMMENT-TYPE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH
