

Twelve Steps to Writing an Effective Conclusion

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Conclusions are often the most difficult part to write, and many writers feel they have nothing left to say after having written the paper. However, you need to keep in mind that most readers read the abstract and conclusion first. A conclusion is where you summarize the paper's findings and generalize their importance, discuss ambiguous data, and recommend further research. An effective conclusion should provide closure for a paper, leaving the reader feeling satisfied that the concepts have been fully explained.

1. Be sure to read the journal's guidelines regarding Conclusions. Always be mindful that different types of scientific papers will require different types of conclusions. For example, some journals require the Conclusions to be part of the Discussion and others, to be a separate section. It is also beneficial to read Conclusions of published articles in the journal you are targeting.
2. Begin with a clear statement of the principal findings. Authors commonly make the mistake of hiding this message deep within the Conclusions.
3. Open with a statement that conveys enough information to cause the reader to carry on reading. The next few sentences should elaborate, if necessary, on the opening statement.
4. State your conclusions clearly and concisely. Be brief and stick to the point.
5. Explain why your study is important to the reader. You should instill in the reader a sense of relevance.
6. Prove to the reader, and the scientific community, that your findings are worthy of note. This means setting your paper in the context of previous work. The implications of your findings should be discussed within a realistic framework.
7. Strive for accuracy and originality in your conclusion. If your hypothesis is similar to previous papers, you must establish why your study and your results are original.
8. Conclude with how your testing supports or disproves your hypothesis. By the time you reach the end of your conclusion, there should be no question in the reader's mind as to the validity of your claims.

9. **Do not** rewrite the abstract. Statements with “investigated” or “studied” are not conclusions.
10. **Do not** introduce new arguments, evidence, new ideas, or information unrelated to the topic.
11. **Do not** apologize for doing a poor job of presenting the material.
12. **Do not** include evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

If the journal requires a statement regarding the need for further research, it should be used to point out any important shortcomings of your work, which could be addressed by further research, or to indicate directions further work could take.