Methods for Developing Conclusions

Like introductions, conclusions can pose problems for essay writers. How do you leave readers feeling that the promise made in the thesis sentence has been met and that the essay is decisively completed?

Strategies for Conclusions:

✓ FRAME: return to the image, comparison, story, and so on from the introductory paragraph. When you “frame” an essay, you return to the introduction and the method you used there (description, narration, comparison/contrast, and so on), extending that content. For example, here is an introduction for “Dangers in a Deli” that uses a narrative approach:

Introduction with a Narrative or “Story-telling” Approach
Shawn came into the restaurant cracking jokes, kidding customers and fellow employees alike, and generally having a good time. Everyone liked him right away and could see that he would be fun to have around, but in the middle of his third day on the job, during the lunch rush, we lost him for good. I was taking an order at table seven, when all the loud talking, jostling, and eating stopped abruptly. Everyone in the restaurant heard Shawn scream as he lost the first joint of his little finger to the meat slicer. He learned the hard way how dangerous this job can be. If employees don’t want to end up in the emergency room on their first day, they need to be aware of the potential dangers in working at a deli.

We can frame the essay by writing a conclusion that extends the narrative like this:

Conclusion with a Narrative Frame
Cuts, chemicals, concussions, and other dangers—there are plenty of ways a person on a job like this can be injured. When Shawn came to us on that first day, I hoped that he would be careful enough to keep working here for awhile. We need fun people like him to make the job more interesting. However, Shawn let himself have too much fun. He stopped by the day after his accident to show us his hand and say goodbye. He didn’t blame anything on us, and he said he was sorry to go. His last words as he walked out the door were “Hey, the next time I’ll know to listen up.” So the lesson is to have fun while working, but don’t become another Shawn.

✓ EXPANDED THOUGHT: Another effective way to capture readers’ attention one last time is to offer an expanded thought. With this strategy, you take your audience one closely-related step beyond the ideas in your body paragraphs, broadening your topic. The following conclusions for the deli essay show different ways to use an expanded thought.

- Personal emotion: Let your reader know how you feel about your topic. What emotional response has it created in you?
  Cuts, chemicals, concussions, and other dangers—there are plenty of ways for a person to get hurt on this job. I worried about it for the first month I was here, especially after I saw several other workers get hurt. However, I learned that I could work safely if, when the restaurant began to speed up and people started moving fast, I kept myself at about 75 percent of my maximum speed. I can still get out the orders and keep everyone satisfied without pushing myself into an accident. Nowadays, I don’t need to worry much about getting hurt. I just pace myself, watch what I’m doing, and have a good time.

- Judgment: Evaluate your topic or express an opinion.
Cuts, chemicals, concussions, and other dangers—with all these ways to get injured, a new person on the job might feel a little nervous. However, deli work doesn't always make you feel anxious and frazzled; in fact, it can be enjoyable. Whether you are talking to interesting customers or spending time with friends, the deli is usually a fun place to work. It can even be a great place for keeping your mind off problems at home or that algebra exam on Friday. Although accidents can happen, you are a lot less likely to have one if you keep the worst of the hazards in mind.

• **Outlook or behavior change:** Show how your outlook on life or behavior has changed as a result of your experience with the topic.
  Cuts, chemicals, concussions, and other dangers—there are plenty of ways for a person to get hurt on this job. Before I came to work here, I used to jump right into an activity without much thought of the consequences. Frying up a stickful of bacon, chasing a soccer ball downfield, mowing the lawn—I used to rush through them all. However, now I think twice. I don't want to burn myself with hot grease, sprain an ankle, or lose part of my foot under the mower. Furthermore, I have found that being more cautious hasn't taken anything from me; instead, it lets me participate more fully in everything. Fingers crossed, from now on I won't be standing around on crutches on the sidelines of anything I want to do in life.

• **Question(s):** Ask one or more questions that might grow from your topic.
  With all these ways to be injured on the job, a person might wonder about working at a deli at all. Why should people put themselves in such a risky situation? The truth is that few jobs are altogether safe. A librarian can fall off a ladder and break a leg as easily as a waiter can slip and fall on a wet tile floor. The only sure way to reduce the chance of injury on the job is to follow the advice lots of parents give their children when they approach streets: stop, look, and listen. Slow down to live longer.

• **Reflective statement:** Tell your readers something that your topic suggests to you beyond the points made in the body paragraphs. Think of some larger or more general application to the world around you.
  With all these ways to be injured on the job, a person might wonder about working at a deli at all. After all, no one wants to be cut, burned by chemicals, or knocked unconscious. However, the truth is that no matter how careful a person might be, accidents cannot always be avoided. The world is an uncertain place, full of dangers. We like to think we can control our lives and protect ourselves absolutely. Because this is not possible, perhaps it's best always to hope for, plan for, and work toward the best while preparing for the worst.

• **Call to action:** Suggest that your readers or someone else act on the information you have presented.
  New employees and old hands alike can have an accident when they get too tired. Falls, scalds, and cuts are not uncommon in the deli as a result. Your best option to protect yourself is to listen to your trainer on your first few days at the job. Sure, some of the advice will sound obvious—"Don't put sharp knives into a sinkful of soapy water"—but the time you stop paying attention is the time you will start hurting. Therefore, during your training period, listen carefully, watch closely, and read thoroughly all the instructions for operating equipment safely. We want to keep you on the job, not put you in the hospital.

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