

# In Context Toolbox – How to Write a Conclusion

The **In Context Toolbox** tip sheets are designed to help middle school and high school researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain how to **write a conclusion** for your report.

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When you give someone a present, you don't just hand it over unwrapped - you put it in a box, wrap it in pretty paper, and top it off with ribbons and bows. Think of your report as a present you give to your teacher. The gift itself is the information you've written in the body of your report. But, like a present, you've got to wrap it up before you hand it in. That's the point of the conclusion.

Well-written reports end with a paragraph or two that tie everything together. This is called the conclusion. The conclusion serves three basic purposes:

To **summarize** the key points of your report. To show how these key points relate to your **main point** or thesis. To communicate a feeling of **finality and closure**.

## Summarizing Key Points

In the conclusion, you aren't presenting new information. Instead, you're calling attention to the most important aspects of the information you've already presented in the body of your report. Summarization is a great way to do this. When you write a summary, you reduce a long piece of writing to its essence by encapsulating it in as few words as possible. You do this by ignoring the minor details and describing only the major highlights.

To summarize your report's key points, first re-read what you've written in the body of your report. Pick out a few of the major highlights. The highlights you select should fit right in with the main point of your report. Write sentences to describe each of the highlights you choose. Try to keep these sentences as short as possible.

## Restating the Main Point

Reread your introductory paragraph. If you've organized it well, the main point will be obvious. In the introduction, you signaled the reader that this point would be key to understanding the information that follows. In the conclusion, your task is to remind the reader why this point is so important. In particular, you want to show how the information you've presented in the body of your report proves that your main point is true.

One way to do this is to mirror the structure of your introductory paragraph. Remember how your introduction served as a road map that gave readers glimpses of where your report would take them? The conclusion does the exact opposite: it helps readers look back on where they've been and shows them why it was worthwhile to have gone there. Summarization helps readers look back on where they've been. Restating the main point shows them why it was worthwhile to have gone there.

Look again at the highlight sentences you wrote when you were summarizing your report. Pick out the best ones. Adapt them for use in your conclusion by putting them in the context of your main point. Then write an additional sentence or two that restates the main point and shows how your highlights support it.

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## Providing Closure

A well-written conclusion leaves the reader feeling satisfied that you've covered everything worth mentioning about your topic. Your highlight sentences and main point restatement can accomplish this, especially if you use language that communicates a sense of finality. To get across this feeling of finality, try these tips:

### Tips

- Restate your points with strong verbs that inspire confidence, such as **show, demonstrate, prove, confirm**, etc.
- Use adverbs that connote certainty, e.g. **conclusively, definitely, unquestionably, decisively**, etc.
- Use adjectives that enhance reliability, e.g. **evident, clear, unmistakable, explicit**, etc.
- Use adverbs such as **thus, consequently, and therefore** to hammer home a point that follows from a previous point.
- Use the **present perfect** tense when referring to research that proves your point.
- Don't use the cliché "further research is needed" unless you really mean it.

### Sample Conclusion

Used properly, calculators **demonstrably improve** upper elementary school students' math skills. **Exhaustive** observational studies of elementary level math classes **have proven** that calculators have not replaced drills and rote memorization in modern math classrooms. Instead, these studies **have shown** that the best math teachers use calculators to **reinforce** skills introduced via the "drill and memorize" method. In one highly successful math curriculum, calculators are used to **demonstrate** that multiplication is nothing more than repeated addition of the same number. **Thus**, calculators help students understand why the multiplication tables they have memorized are **true**. When used in this way, calculators **manifestly** help students **master** the basics of arithmetic, while at the same time helping them learn to reason mathematically. **Unquestionably**, the ability to reason mathematically is **crucial** to the development of higher-level math skills. Research **has also shown** that students exposed to calculators at an early age acquire certain math skills, such as the relationship between fractions and decimals, faster and more thoroughly than students who lack access to calculators. **Clearly**, calculators have a **vital** place in today's elementary school math classrooms.

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