Writing Exercise: Conclusions

Today I want you to focus on writing your conclusion.

This is just a draft and is not set in stone, but is designed to get you thinking about how to structure your conclusion and bring your thoughts to a culminating point.

Before Writing a Conclusion

A conclusion is the moment where you bring everything in your paper together. In some ways your conclusion is pre-built because you're already assuming a specific outcome based on your thesis, so it is "easier" to write than an intro. On the other hand, you need to make sure you are not just saying what's already been said but bringing your thoughts to a culminating point and helping your reader look beyond your essay.

- A conclusion should do some or all of the following:
    - Restatement—Restates the thesis and the main arguments—not just repeating them, but bringing them all together and reminding the reader of your claim and supporting reasons.
    - Culmination—The conclusion is where everything should come together. It should not merely summarize; it should ascend to one final statement of your thinking
    - Send-Off/So What—The culmination should form the basis of the send-off. This point is where the writer can draw broader conclusions. Why does this matter? What have we learned?
- Things to avoid:
    - The mirror image (the most common problem):—the writer merely repeats the thesis and summarizes the main points or presents a reverse of the intro.
    - The unnecessary summary—only lengthy, complex papers need a conclusion that summarizes all of the material covered in the paper.
    - An unnecessary announcement—"And in conclusion, let me say…."
- Pro-tips:
    - As you make revisions to your argument and your supporting points, you'll need to adjust your conclusion to match (or vice versa).
    - Avoid introducing a new idea, claim, subtopic, or piece of evidence in your conclusion. The conclusion is where you tie all of your claims together; it is not the place to introduce new claims or evidence.
    - Make a reasonable final claim; don't overstate your findings.

Writing a Conclusion

1. Write a sentence that communicates to your reader that you are bringing all of your points to a close. Perhaps this means returning to the anecdote or staggering statistic you opened with, but it should also be (or build to) a restatement of your thesis.
    a. Note: Try to avoid phrases like "In conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing."; your reader should be brought naturally to this point from your transitions and organization

2. Re-establish the issue/problem that needs to be addressed and demonstrate how your solution solves that problem.
3. Write a statement (a sentence or two) of culmination. The conclusion is where everything should come together. It should not merely summarize what you've already said, but should bring everything together into one final statement of your thinking.
    a. Synthesize, don't summarize: don't simply repeat things that were in your paper, but show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.
4. If you wish, you may include a statement of any personal judgment (while maintaining the appropriate tone) that stems from the issues the paper has brought up. This is a place where you can provide some insight into your personal thoughts on the matter, but is entirely optional.
5. Write a final statement (a few sentences) that provides a "send-off" for your reader that provides an answer to the question "So what?"
    a. Show your reader why this essay is important and how it fits into the larger conversation or what broader conclusions/implications might follow.
    b. For example, suggest specific actions that the reader should take in light of the information you've provided, speculate about what your thesis implies for the future, and/or point to the broader implications of your proposal.