



From the desk of . . .
David Taylor
david@peakwriting.com
912.398.2987

IT'S OVER: HOW TO END A PARAGRAPH

A body paragraph must have a closing. This closing wrap-ups the paragraph so that the reader isn't wondering what the point of the paragraph was. Thus most paragraph closings refer in some way back to the overall thesis.

In many paragraphs, the closing can be one sentence, although there may be times when more are needed.

JUST DO IT: THREE KEYS TO EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPH CLOSINGS

❶ **Hammer it.** Refer back to the paragraph's main point in light of the evidence you've presented. But now the main point can be referred to as proven, illustrated, or confirmed.

❷ **Echo it.** Expect to repeat some key words from the paragraph's main idea. That repetition is called "echoing," and it's a good thing. Just don't repeat the paragraph's topic sentence word-for-word.

❸ **Signpost it.** Use a transition word to signal the beginning of the conclusion statement: *therefore, as a result, in summary, consequently, finally*, etc. Sometimes the best transition is a phrase that you construct to bridge the paragraph to its conclusion.

Example:

One negative impact of TV on children is the introduction of sexuality. Millions of young viewers watch Britney Spears and Paris Hilton flaunt themselves in music videos and reality TV shows. Jessica Simpson struts in her skimpy Daisy Dukes, sings suggestive lyrics and yet claims to be a role model for young girls. Simpson is a prime example of a wholesome girl turned naughty. She no longer claims the innocence she once wanted to preserve. To further her career, she has turned into what she used to condemn. **Most important, Simpson represents how a girl might see herself after hours of watching role models be glorified for their sexuality: as an object instead of a person. Is that any way for a child to grow up?**

The final sentences successfully conclude the paragraph by referring back to the paragraph's main idea (TV's negative impact on sexuality), echoing key words of the topic sentence (*glorification, sexuality*), and using a transition phrase (*most important*) to join the signal the wrap up.

AVOID THE OBVIOUS: WHAT NOT TO DO IN CLOSING SENTENCES

1. **Don't introduce your next paragraph's main point.** This transitional device was clever about 20 years ago, but the technique has become hackneyed and, because it is so often done poorly, frowned upon.

2. **Don't repeat the overall thesis.** In the example above, the closing clearly refers back to the thesis (children should not watch certain TV shows because of their negative impacts). But it does so without repeating the thesis.

5. **Don't over do it.** Some phrases might be fine for public speaking but can seem over the top in writing:

- “As has been clearly shown in throughout this paragraph ...”
- “Let me wrap up this discussion by repeating ...”
- “As a result of the evidence presented above ...”

If you use a transitional device, simple ones such as “In conclusion” or “As a result” should be sufficient most of the time.

Exercise: *After reading this paragraph describing a negative impact of TV, write a closing statement that adequately ties the paragraph's parts together and refers back to the thesis.*

The second negative impact has been on attitudes toward premarital sex. It seems that each season's new shows try to top the adult content of what came before.

“Remember when Married with Children” was one of the most raunchy television shows?

Say hello to Reality TV. Children are no longer just seeing actors, but live people

conducting themselves in an explicit manner. Once show that sticks out is “The Real

World”—a group of strangers living together and videotaped 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The main topic: sex. They have it with each other and with random people met in bars. In

“The Real World” sex is something that just happens after a few drinks. _____
