

Six Ways to Conclude an Essay

1. Call for Action

A call for action asks the reader to do something. Asking the reader to take an action engages him or her with the topic and leaves a strong impression. This conclusion, for an essay on how to prepare for the TOEFL, asks the reader to be patient and to study vocabulary.

Example

By following these three steps — analyzing, organizing, and practising — students can effectively increase their vocabulary specifically for subjects tested on the TOEFL. This is certainly not a quick process and will require frequent review and practice. However, after going through these steps, students should find that further vocabulary study becomes easier. Idioms and phrasal verbs, for instance, are also tested extensively on the TOEFL (especially in the Listening section) and can be approached by using the same three steps. Remember that patience is the key! A high TOEFL score will only come through perseverance and application, but increasing vocabulary is a very good place to start.

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2. Question

Asking readers a question about the topic also engages them and leaves them with more to think about. You can conclude an essay with one significant question, or you can ask a few questions. This conclusion, for an essay about how coffee has become a part of Canadian culture, asks readers a number of questions.

Example

So there we have it, the new coffee culture. Whatever did we do before these gourmet coffee shops came along? How did we survive on generic convenience store coffee with no cinnamon? Where did the Escapees, the Cool Coffee Drinkers and the Starving Students go when they wanted a break? And, more importantly, if a Canadian resident were to go overseas for five years starting today, what changes in the culture would he or she find upon return to Canada? What could be the next trend? Maybe, before long, we'll all be sipping tea and discussing the merits of Darjeeling over oolong with, naturally, a scone on the side.

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3. Final Decisive Point

A final decisive point is a strong statement of opinion or fact. The purpose is to leave the readers with a lasting impression so that they remember the essay and the points made. This conclusion, from an essay about how to prepare for wilderness camping, ends with a clear statement of the writer's opinion of wilderness camping. You will notice that the writer also uses humour to reinforce her point.

Example

Wilderness camping is not something that can be prepared for in a day. Lists need to be made and ideas generated about all of the possible problems that can be encountered in the wild. My advice is as follows: First, fill your backpack at home with lots of heavy things, like pots and pans and damp clothes. Next, fill a few containers with water and put them in your car. After that, drive to a nearby mountain or trailhead. As soon as you get out of the car, put on the heavy backpack and then pick up one of the water containers. Pour the water slowly over your head until you are soaked. (Don't forget your shoes!) At last, you are ready to begin your practice hike into the wilderness. As for me, I'm heading back to the nearest public campground, and if it rains, I'll be happily snoring in my car.

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4. Overview of Key Points

An overview of key points summarizes the main points made in the essay. This reminds readers of what was discussed and clearly ends the discussion. The following conclusion is an alternative to the previous one from an essay on how to prepare for wilderness camping. This conclusion reinforces the main points discussed in the essay.

Example

Preparing a suitable wardrobe, planning for cooking alternatives and managing a campsite are all essentials for wilderness camping. If you prefer the comforts of home, you should probably stick to a public campground for your first camping experience. However, camping in the wild can be a wonderful adventure and a fantastic way to escape from the stresses of everyday living. As long as you prepare for the worst, surely nothing will go wrong!

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5. Quotation

Using a quotation that is well known, or that is from a well-known person, helps a writer make a point in a powerful way. Quotations give a literary and authoritative tone to an essay. This conclusion, from an essay about teaching animals to "speak," uses a quotation from Malcolm De Chazal, a well-known modern French writer. The quotation makes the reader think about the nature of language and how we use language. This adds significance to the writer's discussion on how animals may learn to use language.

Example

Chazal said "Our expression and our words never coincide, which is why the animals don't understand us." None of these animals can communicate fluently with humans. However, we have learned from Koko, Nim Chimpsky and Kanzi that while primates may not be capable of mastering human language, they are capable of using a communication system. Perhaps it is up to us to learn their communication systems before we, like Dr. Doolittle, can talk to monkeys.

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6. Statistic

Using a statistic in a conclusion leaves readers with an impressive fact that reinforces the points made in the essay. This conclusion, from an essay about different types of neighbours, shows that the writer is part of a large group of people who have had similar experiences. This helps the readers believe what the writer says.

Example

More than fifteen percent of Canadians have lived overseas, so I am no exception. However, I feel that I have more experience than most people because I have lived in several apartment buildings, in several cities around the world. I am convinced that these three general categories of noisy neighbours exist everywhere. At least, I hope they do. The only other explanation for my bad luck with apartments is that when I move, my noisy neighbours pack up their belongings and follow me!