**Ending the Essay: Conclusions**

The end of an essay should convey a sense of completeness and closure as well as a sense of the larger meaning and implications of your discussion.

**In terms of style, one of these might help give a feeling of closure:**

* Full Circle: Conclude by linking the last paragraph to the first, perhaps by reiterating a word or phrase you used at the beginning.
* Sentence power: Conclude with a sentence composed mainly of one-syllable words. Simple language can help create an effect of understated drama.
* Sentence subtlety: Conclude with a sentence that's compound or parallel in structure; such sentences can establish a sense of balance or order that may feel just right at the end of a complex discussion.

**In terms of content, try one of these approaches:**

* Conclude with a quotation or summary from one of your sources if it helps to amplifies your main point or puts it in a different perspective. A quotation from, the memoir or poem or essay you're writing about can add texture and give us a vivid picture as a final image. Just be cautious: make sure you get the last word.
* Conclude by setting your discussion into a different, perhaps larger, context. For example, an essay on restorative justice could end by explaining the specific ways whole communities benefit from this process, not just the victim and criminal.
* Conclude by considering the implications of your argument. For example, you might end an essay on juvenile incarceration by linking it to the larger problem of our culture’s failure of empathy for the poor.
* Conclude by redefining one of the key terms of your argument. For example if you argued for rehabilitation in your essay, you might consider in the conclusion whether this term is really appropriate for youth that never got a first chance; we aren’t re-doing anything since education, care and support were never offered in the first place.
* Offer a solution or call to action. It’s satisfying to readers to feel that a solution is possible, even if it’s just a small improvement of a difficult problem.

**Finally, some advice on how not to end an essay:**

* Don't simply summarize your essay. A brief summary of your argument may be useful, especially if your essay is long--more than ten pages or so. But shorter essays tend not to require a restatement of your main ideas.
* Avoid phrases like "in conclusion," "to conclude," "in summary," and "to sum up." These phrases can be useful--even welcome--in oral presentations. But readers can see when an essay is about to end by the blank at the end of the last page. You'll irritate your audience if you belabor the obvious.
* Resist the urge to apologize or retreat. Don't undercut your authority or the impact of your paper by saying things like, "this is just one approach to the subject; there may be other, better approaches. . ." or “Everyone has a different opinion. Mine is just one.”