

Often, the conclusion is the most important part of a scholarly book or a research paper. Busy readers may focus only on the final chapter or section, so the conclusion must provide all of the important information in a just few pages or a few paragraphs.

A good conclusion will accomplish several things. More detailed than an abstract, a good conclusion will summarize the purpose, methods, significance, and findings of the research. The most important findings will be identified in the conclusion along with any surprises uncovered by the research. Implications of the research should also be discussed.

One way to organize the conclusion to a research project is as follows:

- I. Brief restatement of the purpose and methods of the research (one paragraph).
- II. Brief review of the significance of the topic and the research (one paragraph).
- III. Summary of key findings. (Use at least one paragraph for each finding.)
 - Do not present a scorecard on the number of hypotheses supported.
 - Use declarative statements of what is now known. For example:
 - *Wrong:* Hypothesis 6 regarding income was supported.
 - *Wrong:* There was a strong relationship between income and party ID.
 - *Correct:* People with higher incomes tend to identify with the Republican Party more than people with lower incomes.
 - Provide some discussion and explanation for each finding.
 - If possible provide some conceptual structure to the findings. For example:
 - *Wrong:* Hypotheses using political variables had the strongest relationships, and hypotheses using demographic variables had the weakest.
 - *Correct:* The political influences of party and ideology had the greatest effect on beliefs, and demographic influences had the weakest. Specifically, democrats and liberals supported gun control more than republicans and conservatives, and there was essentially no difference between men and women and between the young and the old on this issue.
- IV. Implications. Some possibilities:
 - Policy Implications. Discuss possible legislation, executive orders, or bureaucratic regulations. Focus can be on the international, federal, state, or local level.
 - Political Implications. How can candidates, campaigns, parties, or interest groups use the information learned in this study? Which party is likely to benefit from this information?
 - Theoretical Implications. How does this new information relate to conventional knowledge within Political Science? Are established theories supported or challenged by your findings?
 - Methodological Implications. Were new research methods or data used? Were new variables created? How can these new methods help future researchers?
- V. Call for more research (one paragraph).
 - What is needed for more research? More current data, more cases, better measures, etc.
 - What areas of the topic need more research?
- VI. Final statements (one paragraph).
 - Most interesting surprise.
 - Most important finding.
 - Final concluding statement.