

THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER

at **Sam Houston**
STATE UNIVERSITY

Conclusions

Conclusions are difficult. You are usually expected to somehow summarize your entire paper without it sounding redundant. The best thing you can do is find a new way to say what you have said in the essay, making creative use of alternative word choices, sentence structures, and paragraph structures.

Suggestions

Convert Your Introduction

In your introduction, you may have started with a broad topic to contextualize your paper. Then, you may have narrowed down the discussion to the specific topic of your paper. You may have included a brief preview of the points of your body paragraphs (the support for your thesis). Also, you should have included a thesis statement.

Typically, it is unwise to use any of your introduction's exact language in your conclusion. However, rephrasing a few of the ideas in fresh language is a functional way to conclude a paper. Consider this **introduction**:

Example: *Parents must decide what foods to serve their children, sometimes basing decisions on whether the option is easy to prepare and whether their children will accept the option. One available option is peanut butter, a food that is relatively simple to serve and traditionally enjoyed by children. However, two varieties of peanut butter are available, so parents who decide to offer their children peanut butter must further choose between creamy and crunchy options. Because pieces of peanut can make spreading more difficult and because even those who prefer crunchy can accept creamy, whereas the reverse is not always true, creamy peanut butter is better than crunchy peanut butter.*

That paragraph attempts to move from a broad subject (*context*: choosing food) to a specific concern (topic: peanut butter), then to an assertion (*thesis statement*: creamy is better). The author can work backwards—from thesis to context—for the **conclusion**:

Example: *The superiority of creamy peanut butter over the less spreadable, less acceptable crunchy peanut butter is a food fact that parents may find useful when selecting manageable, desirable dietary options for their children.*

The ideas are the same here as in the introduction, but the wording is different and they are presented in a new order.

Use a Narrative or Anecdote

While not appropriate for all assignments, an occasionally pleasant and useful way to rearticulate your main points is to show them in action by offering a brief story that exemplifies the message of your thesis. For example:

Example: *Both of the previously mentioned reasons for choosing creamy over crunchy can be seen at work in the story of Mary Mack. Mrs. Mack learned about crunchy peanut butter the hard way. When her son, Ben, was four years old, Mary purchased crunchy peanut butter and struggled for several minutes to spread it onto a slice of bread without tearing the bread. Once she had finally assembled a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, Mary offered it to Ben, who, to his mother's surprise, cried upon taking a single bite. Ben, it turns out, disliked crunchy peanut butter and refused to eat a sandwich that included it. After her experience with crunchy peanut butter's lack of spreadability and acceptability, Mary decided that creamy peanut butter was the better option.*

Use a Specific Example

Like the narrative, a specific example of your ideas at work in real life can help contextualize your paper in an interesting way. For example:

Example: *In 2001, the organization Parents for Crunchy Peanut Butter (PCPB) purchased advertising space in national magazines to improve the image of crunchy peanut butter (Helms 8). Despite their efforts, the public continued to view creamy peanut butter as the preferable choice. As reported in the Peanut Butter Press, many respondents to a poll contended that "crunchy is too tough to spread and [their] kids just do not like it" (4). While the PCPB may hope to see the jury deliberate further, the verdict is in.*