



## **Growing The Essay Fast Track – Syllabus**

**Course Description:** This class covers all *Growing the Essay* content in our standard eight-week format. Students learn how to grow essays through constructing stronger introductions and conclusions and through improving writing voice. Students then learn about the four essay styles: descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive. Students should be prepared to write one complete essay each week.

### **Course Outline:**

**Week One:** Starting Well – More About the Introduction

**Week Two:** Ending Well – More About the Conclusion

**Week Three:** Improving Writing Voice

A. Sentence Length & Variety

B. Vivid Vocabulary

C. Showing Sentences

**Week Four:** Showing through Writing: The Descriptive Essay

**Week Five:** Using Figurative Language: The Descriptive Essay – An Idea

**Week Six:** Creating Significance: The Narrative Essay

**Week Seven:** Using Sources: Historical Exposition

**Week Eight:** Creating Debate: Intro to Persuasive Writing

**Grading Information:** All assignments will be graded using *The Growing Writer Rubric* and averaged to receive a final course grade.



## Growing The Essay Fast Track

### Lesson Two: Ending Well

#### More about the Conclusion

#### SAMPLE LESSON

Last week, we learned more about constructing a captivating introduction, one that *welcomes the reader and gains his/her attention*. Too many students depend upon a method when it comes to writing the introduction; the same is true when it comes to writing the conclusion. Again, though, a list or a method is not going to be as effective as it is easy.

The main purpose of the introduction is to grab the reader's attention. The introduction gets the reader interested in your topic and prepared for what is ahead. The introduction provides context so that the reader understands the significance of the topic.

On the other hand, the main purpose of the conclusion is to leave the reader feeling something or thinking about something. The conclusion should clearly end the essay, provide closure, and leave a good impression of your work. In addition, the conclusion should restate the topic and key points, without using the same words/sentence structure. But, beyond this, an effective conclusion engages a reader's emotions, compelling them to inspiration, excitement, hope, thoughtfulness, or action. No wonder so many students have a hard time writing conclusions! A method just doesn't work well.

First, let us begin with what a conclusion is NOT:

1. **The conclusion is not your introduction, reworded.** Many students fall for this error. They write a great introduction and a great essay body, but then for the conclusion, they just copy the introduction and paste it right at the bottom of the essay. That seems a little ridiculous, but it happens. On the other hand, some students understand that you cannot just copy and paste, so they reword the introduction and call it done. But that's not a conclusion either. If the conclusion were merely meant to be a repeat of the introduction, why write the conclusion at all?

2. **The conclusion is not just a summary of your essay.** Again, this is a common pitfall when it comes to writing a conclusion. You have probably heard the concept: “Tell the reader what you are going to say, then tell the reader what you are saying, then tell the reader what you have said.” But the conclusion should not merely be a summary of your main points, a brief reminder of what you just discussed. Even in a long essay, most readers can synthesize the information you have written fairly well in their heads. An essay is not the same as a business meeting or a lecture. The conclusion should not be a summary, a play-by-play, or a bullet list of key points.
  
3. **The conclusion is not a stand-alone paragraph and should never introduce new ideas or arguments.** Many students understand this, which is why they tend to rephrase their introductions or summarize their key points only, because they are so afraid of writing something new. However, the conclusion should still be meaningful, which is why it should be a place where you reflect on the ideas you have already written about rather than introducing new ideas or arguments.

So, what is a conclusion? As you learned in *Essay Basics*, a conclusion should include a restatement of the thesis, a synthesis of the main ideas, and a form of closure. Students can typically master a restatement of the thesis and a synthesis of the main ideas, but when it comes to closure, they struggle to know how to fill in the gaps. What can you write that leaves the reader feeling or thinking about something?

Last week, we suggested that the introduction is a sales pitch to get someone in the door. Now you've got the reader in the door and through the whole essay, in fact. The conclusion then is like a sales pitch to get someone to buy your product, try your service, or make an investment. The conclusion should leave your reader with a good final impression of your ideas or arguments, so that the reader is then inspired to further thought, action, or emotion. Again, let's look at an example:

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### The Art of Gardening

If you are used to buying your produce from the grocery store, the idea of growing your own fruits and vegetables can seem very difficult. In truth, gardening is a challenging venture, because you have to plant things and hope they grow despite weather, pests, and soil problems. With such potential difficulties and the fact that most people do not know how to

begin the process, gardening is becoming less and less popular. Still, a few key steps can get you started in the right direction and on your way to growing produce in your own yard.

Before beginning the gardening process, it is important to have the proper tools and supplies to correctly do the job. Proper gardening tools include a rototiller, hoe, rake, and shovel; these tools will help you prepare the ground effectively. Compost, seeds, row markers, and mulch are all supplies needed to plant, sustain, and beautify a garden. With tools in hand, you can now begin to plan your garden.

Like most things, having a plan before you start gives you a greater chance at being successful in the end. A usable plan is one of the most important assets of the garden. Still, with so many types of plants available, making a plan can also be one of the hardest parts. The first step in any good garden plan is dreaming. Looking over seed or produce catalogs can provide inspiration and allow you to discover the endless possibilities of plants to grow. Make a list of what you would love to grow.

Unfortunately, you will likely not be able to grow everything on your dream list. Now, you must create a usable plan, to visualize where the plants can fit. You must assess the space and the lighting primarily. You should first plan your garden based on the sunlight your yard receives. Some plant groups require full sun, while others prefer shade. You should also know how much space each type of plant may need, for some require very little space and some require lots of space to sprawl roots or grow. In addition, if you are able, each year the plant groups (leaves, fruits, roots, and legumes) should be rotated to maintain soil fertility. All of this information should be combined into a working plan that will give you a greater chance at a successful garden.

With a plan in hand, the next task the gardener must complete is preparing the ground. Preparing the land begins by adding compost to the garden. Then, using the rototiller, you must break up the ground to expose the richer soil beneath. After the rototiller has completed its job, the ground must be given time to settle. Then, all the rocks that may have migrated to the surface must be removed. The planting areas are laid out at this time. Mulch is a very helpful divider for large areas. Following the preparation of the ground, the planting process can begin.

Planting and taking care of the produce are the steps that most people think of in the gardening process. The way you follow these steps will help or hinder what grows. First,

planting methods and times vary by type of plant. Seed packets or the packaging for starter plants should provide the information needed for how and when to plant. If not, you can always consult a gardening book or the internet. Once seeds or starters have been planted, use row markers so you will not forget what you planted and where. When the plant is growing, the soil should be kept moist, and the weeds that emerge must be removed. A watchful eye for pests or plant damage is also an important component for taking care of the garden and ensuring that you will be able to harvest good produce.

After several weeks or months, it is time to harvest! When growing personal produce, the harvest may only be small bits at a time, depending on how many plants are in the garden. It may be only a tomato here and a cucumber there, but the pleasure of picking your own produce is still delightful. The smaller produce such as beans, peas, and tomatoes can be pulled off the vines with your hands, but larger produce such as zucchini may need to be cut with a knife to avoid breaking or damaging any other portion of the plant.

### **CONCLUSION GOES HERE –**

Now, let us compare three different ways to write a conclusion for this essay.

- **Bad conclusion (rephrasing of the thesis statement and summary of key points only, lacking any development):**

Because of weather, pests, and soil problems combined with the fact that most people do not know how to begin the process, gardening can be a very challenging venture. But, if you follow these steps of getting the right tools and supplies, dreaming and planning, and finally planting and caring for the garden, you will be able to walk outside and pick whatever you want in no time.

- **Better conclusion (recaps on central points and makes some attempt to draw them together):**

Because of weather, pests, and soil problems combined with the fact that most people do not know how to begin the process, gardening can be a very challenging venture. Still, following a few key steps can help you get started and find success with time. Growing produce is not a process only for farmers or people with a lot of land. With time, diligence, practice, and effort, all sorts of produce can be grown in your yard.

- **Best conclusion (recaps central points but makes the key links between them explicit and points towards broader meaning):**

Being able to walk outside and pick produce which you yourself have grown is a great pleasure. Unfortunately, many people never know this pleasure because they consider gardening to be too difficult or perhaps even impossible. However, if you take the time to break down the gardening process into steps, it becomes both manageable and worthwhile. Trial and error may be your friend for a while, but the results are worth it. Tasting produce you have grown yourself is both delightful and life-changing.

Remember, an effective conclusion is not constructed by a method. While it must contain a restatement of the thesis and a synthesis of the main ideas in the essay, the conclusion should ultimately leave your reader with a good final impression of your ideas and arguments, so that the reader is then inspired to further thought, action, or emotion.

**Assignment 2:** Change can be good. If we were to think this through, we would all likely be able to come up with something to change. If *you* could change one thing in your family, your neighborhood, your city, your nation, or the world, what would it be? Write a seven (7) to ten (10) paragraph essay using specific examples to state **what** you would change, **why** you would change it, and **how** you would change it. (Please note that this is NOT a persuasive essay; therefore, do NOT use the word *should*. This essay is meant to discuss a hypothetical change, using the words *could* or *would*.) **MAX WORD COUNT: 1,000 words.**

Focus intently on crafting an introduction that avoids any listing or method-style writing. Remember to include a fitting hook and a clear thesis with a bridge that gets the reader's attention. Then write the body of the essay, explaining **what** you would change, **why** you would change it, and **how** you would change it. Finally, write a conclusion. Avoid rewording the introduction, summarizing only, or introducing new ideas. Remember to restate the thesis and synthesize the main ideas while also providing closure that sells your ideas and moves the reader to a meaningful ending.

**Ensure that the essay is formatted properly.** Include your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner of the page and a title centered above the essay. Properly format the paragraphs with an indent or a full space between each, and left-align the text. Justified text is optional but not required. Content should be typed in one of the standard fonts, size 12. **MAX WORD COUNT: 1,000 words.**