

The Bookend Technique: How to Write Introductions and Conclusions

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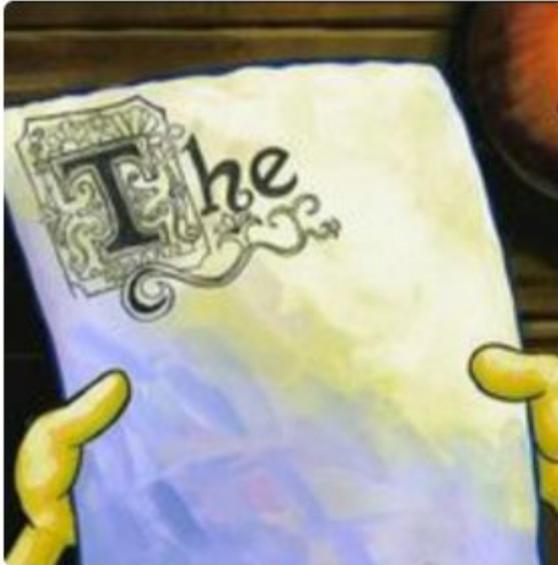
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Starting an essay can be overwhelming and it can sometimes feel like an impossible task. This week's lesson is going to dive into some strategies for starting and ending your essays.

Writing an Essay:



**Intro and
1st
paragraph**



**2nd and
3rd
Paragraph**



Conclusion

Not only can starting an essay be a frustrating task, but sometimes, ending it can be just as frustrating.

I want to encourage you to practice using the bookend technique to make both of these high stress stages of essay writing more comfortable.

How to break up with your reader while giving them closure.



Think about your essay like a relationship.

Have you ever had a relationship end badly? Did you feel lost, alone or unsure of what to do next because you didn't have any closure?

Don't put your readers in such agony!

When you write an essay you are developing a relationship with your reader and it's important to give them a sense of closure so they can go on with their lives and learn from the experience.

Think about what closure from a relationship would look like.

Maybe a conversation where you acknowledge all the things you've been through together, discuss the past, and point towards the future. Where do we go now?

This is the same idea you want to think about for your conclusion paragraphs. Remember the past and point towards the future.

Writing a conclusion can be frustrating, but a conclusion is one of the most important parts of your essay.

Elements of a good conclusion:

Summarizes your main points

Restates your thesis

Elements of an amazing, perfect, incredible conclusion:

Summarizes your main points

Restates your thesis and tells us why this matters.

Tells the reader what to do now. How should we move forward now that we've learned what you've taught us?

Finally, (and this one's the really effective one!) Bookends a story from your introduction and reflects on that story with a new perspective. This way your paper comes full circle, and is final and complete!

The Bookend Technique: How to break up with your reader

Bookends are objects used to hold books together on a shelf. Think of your introduction and conclusion paragraphs like bookends that hold your essay together.

Bookends will often:

- Hold things together
- Keep them organized and neat
- Have a thematic connection to the content of the books.



How to write a bookend in your intro and conclusion

Intro: Look to the past

Start with a story: a moment in your life that relates to the topic you're writing about which will ground your reader in the topic of the essay.

Conclusion: Look to the future

Come back to this story and say something new about it. What do you notice now reflecting on this story after having written your essay. What has changed? What do you hope will change in the future?

Open your intro with a story: Use lots of concrete details

On Halloween in 1997, my block in central Queens was swarming with kids wearing the Ghost Face costume from *Scream*. Black cloaks with tattered sleeves skipped passed sewer grates at dusk, just before the street lights went on. That white mask with the droopy black eye sockets and a gaping chasm for a mouth was everywhere. Kids wielded rubber knives as fake blood dripped down their faces. They ran in packs across the street and chased each other into the alleys. The wormhole to the horror movie universe opened and spilled out on the asphalt all around me. Like the mask, I stared, stuck between a smile and a scream. I wanted to wear it, even though I didn't actually sit down and watch the movie until Middle School. Ghost Face is now the last iconic mask of the slasher genre, but it acknowledges the masks that came before it. In *Scream*, John Carpenter's *Halloween* plays on a television set during a party, and in Queens, Ghost Face runs rampant every Halloween. It would take me years to discover that *Scream*'s ability to acknowledge a generation of horror movies that came before it, made *Scream* an act of folklore. It was a retelling and it has since been retold. It was an homage and trick or treaters have paid homage to it ever since. The killer asks in the opening scene, "What's your favorite scary movie?" because he wants you to remember the movies before this one. I realized horror can function as contemporary folklore, and I wanted to find out how.

Conclusion: Come back to the story and tell us what it means

Scream features the last iconic mask of the horror genre, but every Halloween children still put on the mask and run through the streets at dusk, tattered sleeves flowing behind them. In the past twenty years, no masked killers were able to replicate a similar level of popularity. *Scream* both revived the Slasher genre and became a perfect form of punctuation for it. Its ability to pay homage to its predecessors while creating the genre of post-modern horror solidifies the “Ghost-Face” killer of *Scream* as the last iconic figure of the slasher genre.

More Conclusion Techniques

Play the “So What” Game.

When you read a statement from the conclusion, ask yourself, “So what?” or “Why should anybody care?”

Ponder that question and answer it

Basically, I’m just saying that education was important to Douglass

So what?

Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen

Why should anybody care?

That’s important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.

More Ways to Bookend

Return to the theme or themes in the introduction

This brings the reader full circle

If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding

Refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words, or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction

Pull It All Together

Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in the paper

Show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together

Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for the paper

Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study

Point to broader implications

A paper about the style of writer, Virginia Woolf, could point to her influence on other writers or later feminists

Conclusion Strategies That Do Not Work

Stating the thesis for the very first time

Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion

Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of the paper

Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper

Structure of Conclusion

A conclusion is the opposite of the introduction

Remember that the introduction begins general and ends specific

The conclusion begins specific and moves to the general

<https://www.time4writing.com/writing-resources/writing-a-good-conclusion-paragraph/>

