

# Essay Introductions and Conclusions: Notes

## Introductory Paragraphs – Examples

**You can see that the thesis statement for each of these examples is the same:** Three resolutions that I plan on keeping this year are to exercise regularly, to send Christmas cards, and to apply for technology grants.

### A. Using a Quotation

The great United States poet, Maya Angelou, once said, “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.” Her words make a lot of sense to me as I think about the New Year’s resolutions I would like to make in 2001. Instead of complaining about things I don’t like, I’m going to try to make some changes. Three resolutions that I plan on keeping this year are to exercise regularly, to send Christmas cards, and to apply for technology grants.

### B. Using a Startling Fact or Statistic

According to a new University of Washington survey, 63 percent of the people questioned were still keeping their number one New Year’s resolution after two months. That’s pretty encouraging to me, as I think about my New Year’s resolutions. If that many people can fulfill their promises to themselves, I’m confident that I can, too. The three resolutions that I plan on keeping in the year 2001 are to exercise regularly, send Christmas cards, and apply for technology grants.

### C. Using an Anecdote

I can remember the first time I learned about New Year’s resolutions. I made a list of about twenty changes I wanted to make in my life. Of course, the list was too long to remember, and the resolutions were too difficult to keep. I don’t think I ended up following a single one for more than a few days. Although I haven’t been very good at keeping my New Year’s resolutions in the past, this year I’m determined to follow through with my promises. Three resolutions that I plan on keeping this year are to exercise regularly, send Christmas cards, and apply for technology grants.

### D. Using a Rhetorical Question

Why is it so difficult to keep a New Year’s resolution? Could it be that we set unrealistic goals for ourselves? Or do we make our resolutions just before midnight without really thinking the matter over? Although I haven’t been very good at keeping my New Year’s resolutions in the past, this year I’m determined to follow through with my promises. Three resolutions that I plan on keeping are to exercise regularly, send Christmas cards, and apply for technology grants.

### E. Using Description

It’s a few minutes before midnight. The party hats are on, the streamers are ready to fly, and the noisemakers are ready to be blown. Suddenly I’m filled with the overwhelming urge to make some New Year’s resolutions on anything from losing weight to keeping a journal to learning how to watercolor. I might even take a few seconds to write the resolutions down. Is it any wonder that such hastily thought-out resolutions are rarely kept? This year I’ve considered my goals very carefully. The three resolutions I plan on keeping are to exercise regularly, to send Christmas cards, and to apply for technology grants.

### F. Story Summary (for Response to Literature essay)

The main character in Harvey Swashbuckle’s short story “A New Leaf” is a young girl named Melanie. She lives in a small town in the middle of a cold and snowy Nebraska. The problem she faces is that she’s new to the town and her shyness is keeping her from making new friends.

During the story, she meets an old lady in a nursing home who talks to her about her adventurous teenage years. In the beginning of the story, Melanie is shy and fearful about getting to know the kids at her new school, but during the story she learns that she can’t let life pass her by, and she becomes more confident and outgoing.

## Writing Effective Conclusions

A conclusion provides a thoughtful end to a piece of writing;

### Avoid:

- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement that contains no substantive changes.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic (although you may end with a provocative question; see below).
- Focusing on a minor point in the essay.
- Concluding with a sentence tacked on to your final point.
- Apologizing for your view by saying such things as "I may not be an expert" or "At least this is my opinion."

### Conclude an essay with one or more of the following:

- Include a brief summary of the paper's main points.
- Ask a provocative question.
- Use a quotation.
- Evoke a vivid image.
- Call for some sort of action.
- End with a warning.
- Universalize (compare to other situations).
- Suggest results or consequences.

## Concluding Paragraphs – Examples

These are connected to the introduction examples above.

1. Use a new quotation or refer back to the opening quotation.

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very realistic goals for me. Instead of complaining about how I feel or what I don't have, I'm going to take Maya Angelou's advice and make some changes. If I keep these promises I've made to myself, I know I'll have a better life and a better attitude.

2. Make a prediction or recommendation based on the facts or statistics.

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very realistic goals for me. I don't plan on being one of the 37 percent who weren't able to keep their New Year's resolutions. I intend on keeping these promises that I've made to myself.

3. Complete the anecdote.

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very important goals for me. Unlike years past, my resolutions are focused and realistic. I intend on keeping these promises that I've made to myself.

4. Ask a final rhetorical question.

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very realistic goals for me. Now that I've planned out my resolutions carefully, I know I have a better chance of making them happen. With determination and will power, how can

I possibly fail?

## 5. Continue the original description of a character, setting, or object

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very realistic goals for me. At the end of this year, after the party is over, and the hats and confetti are colorfully scattered across the floor, I'll feel good about the plans I made and the promises I was able to keep.

## 6. Make a Call to Action

Keeping physically fit, mailing out greeting cards, and filling out applications for technology grants are three very realistic goals for me. Perhaps you also have some goals for the new year in mind. If not, I urge you to sit down and make some today. You will feel better about yourself when you have reached your chosen objectives.

## 7. Summary (for Response to Literature essay)

Although Melanie is tentative about making new friends in the beginning of the story, by the end she has become more assertive and outgoing. As we see Melanie's character develop, we realize that although it may be scary to face big changes in life, overcoming difficult challenges can help us to grow and become stronger in ways that we may never have imagined were possible.