You've probably heard at some point that your conclusion should be a restatement of your thesis. Unfortunately, this is lousy advice. Think about it: If you've already said it clearly in your introduction and supported it effectively in the body of your essay, what's the point in simply repeating it at the end? So, what's the function of a conclusion? What makes a conclusion effective? There's no simple formula. What makes a good conclusion varies depending on the writer's argument, the paper's purpose, and the intended audience. The following hints, however, may help:

A strong conclusion may:
- synthesize the main points in language that acknowledges the reader’s familiarity with the argument
- offer a vivid illustration or image that emphasizes the central argument
- return to an image or event presented in the introduction, now placing it in a new perspective
- include a relevant and particularly powerful quotation that echoes the thesis
- indicate implications or consequences of the writer’s point, perhaps offering a warning or challenge to the reader
- pose a provocative question that arises from the central argument
- call for specific action
- speculate on what might have been under other circumstances

A strong conclusion does not:
- begin with phrases like In conclusion or To summarize.
- state the thesis clearly for the first time.
- simply repeat or rephrase a thesis presented in the introduction.
- consist of just one sentence tacked on to the end of the paper.
- attempt to tie up loose ends that should have been addressed in the body of the paper.
- introduce a whole new topic or point that demands support of its own.
- adopt a defensive tone (e.g., “Of course, I’m no expert...” or “You may not agree, but this is my opinion”).

The following websites offer additional advice on writing conclusions and provide a few helpful examples:

http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/

http://www1.aucegypt.edu/academic/writers/conclusion.htm

http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/conclusions

http://www.swarthmore.edu/academics/writing-program/student-resources/how-do-i-write-a-compelling-conclusion.xml