

Topic Sentences

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. Sometimes referred to as a focus sentence, the topic sentence helps organize the paragraph by summarizing the information in the paragraph. In formal writing, the topic sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph (although it doesn't have to be).

Purpose of the Topic Sentence

A topic sentence essentially tells readers what the rest of the paragraph is about. All sentences after it have to give more information about that sentence, prove it by offering facts about it, or describe it in more detail. For example, if the topic sentence concerns the types of endangered species that live in the ocean, then every sentence after that needs to expound on that subject.

Topic sentences also need to relate back to the thesis of the essay. The thesis statement is like a road map that will tell the reader or listener where you are going with this information or how you are treating it.

Topic Sentences and Controlling Ideas

Every topic sentence will have a topic and a controlling idea. The controlling idea shows the direction the paragraph will take.

Here are some examples:

- Topic Sentence: There are many reasons why pollution in ABC Town is the worst in the world.
- The topic is "pollution in ABC Town is the worst in the world" and the controlling idea is "many reasons."
- Topic Sentence: To be an effective CEO requires certain characteristics.
- The topic is "To be an effective CEO" and the controlling idea is "certain characteristics."
- Topic Sentence: There are many possible contributing factors to global warming.
- The topic is "global warming" and the controlling idea is "contributing factors."

Drill:

- Topic Sentence: Fortune hunters encounter many difficulties when exploring a shipwreck.
- Topic Sentence: Dogs make wonderful pets because they help you to live longer.
- Topic Sentence: Crime in poverty-stricken areas occurs as a result of a systemic discrimination.
- Topic Sentence: Teen pregnancy may be prevented by improved education.
- Topic Sentence: Cooking requires a number of different skills.
- Topic Sentence: It is important to be ready before buying a house.
- Topic Sentence: Graduating from high school is important for many different reasons.
- Topic Sentence: Having a first child is difficult because of the significant adjustments in your life.
- Topic Sentence: Remodeling a kitchen successfully requires research and a good eye.

A carefully thought out topic sentence has two functions. First, it helps you, the author, to stay focused. Second, a clearly stated topic and controlling idea will give readers the tools they need to clearly understand what you have to say.

Remember that topic sentences set the tone for the paragraph and should relate back to the thesis or the main idea of the paper.