

Topic Sentences Practice

Topic Sentences:

Topic sentences are used to focus ideas and express the main point of paragraphs. A strong set of topic sentences will work together to support a thesis.

Practice:

Practice using topic sentences to keep your ideas focused: Read the paragraph below: Find the topic sentence; can you find the irrelevant sentence?

Learning a second language can provide a deeper understanding of a foreign culture. Social habits that may not make sense to most outsiders might start to make more sense after a few vocabulary lessons. For example, I always wondered why my Dutch cousins rarely said “you’re welcome” after I said “thank you”. My cousin can speak English but sometimes makes mistakes. At first I thought he was being rude, but when I learned more about his language I realized that they don’t use “you’re welcome” the same way we do: in response to “thank you”. They actually say something that translates to “If you please” when they offer you something. This is one of the first things I learned about Dutch culture when I started to learn their language and it gave me a different perspective on the roles of host and guest since in Dutch the onus to be polite is on the host, and not the guest as it seems to be in English.

Exercise:

Read the following sentences. As you read complete the following tasks:

*For screen reader users: Blanks will be indicated by a * sign.*

- A. Identify correct Topic Sentences (**write OK**).
- B. Identify and correct sentences which are too broad or too narrow (**write TB or TN**).
- C. Identify and correct sentences which announce the topic (**write A**).
- D. Identify and correct incomplete ideas (**write INC**).

1) *_____ Why coping is an important aspect of recovery will be shown in the following paragraphs.

- 2) * _____ Mr. X has five full-grown children.
3. * _____ Quitting smoking may improve your singing voice.
4. * _____ This paragraph outlines the negative effects of daylight savings on your health.
5. * _____ Steven takes vitamin C every morning.
6. * _____ This paragraph concerns how helmets should be worn by all hockey players.
7. * _____ Drug use in Canada is a controversial issue.
8. * _____ The greatest thing about Toronto is the night life.
9. * _____ How I learned to cook healthier food.
10. * _____ The politician's earnest answers made the audience feel at ease.

Answers: 1. INC, 2. TN, 3. OK, 4. A, 5. TN, 6. A, 7. TB, 8. OK, 9. INC, 10. OK.

Controlling Idea:

A good topic sentence of a paragraph contains two elements: **the topic** and the **controlling idea**.

Topic: The subject of the paragraph.

Controlling Idea: limits the topic, shows the reader how the writer will limit the topic.

Example:

Adjusting to Canadian winters has been a real challenge for me.

Topic: Adjusting to Canadian Winters.

Controlling Idea: has been a real challenge for me.

Exercise:

Now it is your turn! Look at the following TOPICS. They are very broad. Decide how to limit them by writing a topic sentence with a CLEAR controlling idea.

1. Summer

Limited Topic:
Controlling Idea:
Topic Sentence:

2. Learning English

Limited Topic:
Controlling Idea:
Topic Sentence:

3. Sports

Limited Topic:
Controlling Idea:
Topic Sentence:

4. Food

Limited Topic:
Controlling Idea:
Topic Sentence:

5. Smoking

Limited Topic:
Controlling Idea:
Topic Sentence: