

1. The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It has two parts: a topic and a controlling idea. The topic names the subject of the paragraph. The controlling idea tells what the paragraph will say about the topic. It is called the controlling idea because it controls or limits the topic to a very specific point or points.

Examples : Some weddings are very simple.
Topic Controlling idea

Here are examples of topic sentences with the same topic but different controlling ideas:

My friend is an honest person.
Topic Controlling idea
My friend is the funniest person I know.
Topic Controlling idea
My friend has a terribly dangerous job.
Topic Controlling idea

Tips to Make a Topic Sentence

There are three important points you remember when you make a topic sentence. Let's discuss them.

1. It should be a complete sentence

A topic sentence is a complete sentence; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement. Let's see the following examples :

Gold has five characteristics. (complete)

The characteristics of gold. (incomplete)

2. It should contain a topic and a controlling idea

A topic sentence should have two parts—a topic and a controlling idea.

Registering for college will be a new experience for students
Topic Controlling idea

3. It should give only the main idea, not too specific and not too general

The controlling idea must say something about the topic that can then be supported, developed, or demonstrated in the supporting sentences. The controlling idea must also not be too general. Consider the following examples :

A surprise party is a kind of party. (too general)

My classmates gave me unforgettable surprise party for my 18th birthday. (effective)

There were 14 guests at my surprise birthday party. (too specific)

The Position of the Topic Sentence

The topic sentence may be the first or last sentence in a paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of the paragraph. Experienced writers sometimes put topic sentence at the end, but the best place is usually right at the beginning. At the beginning of a paragraph it gives readers an idea of what they will read. This helps them understand the paragraph more easily. Let's observe the following model of paragraphs. Notice the different positions for the topic sentence in each paragraph. The topic sentences are underlined

Hurricanes

Hurricanes, which are also called cyclones, exert tremendous power. These violent storms are often a hundred miles in diameter, and their winds can reach velocities or speeds of seventy-five miles per hour or more. Furthermore, the strong winds and heavy rainfall that accompany them can completely destroy a small town in a couple of hours. The energy that is released by a hurricane in one day exceeds the total energy consumed by humankind throughout the world in one year.

Famous School "Failures"

Albert Einstein, one of the world's geniuses, failed his university entrance examinations on his first attempt. William Faulkner, one of the America's noted writers, never finished college because he could not pass his English courses. Sir Winston Churchill, who is considered one of the masters of English language, had to have special tutoring in English during elementary school. These few examples show that failure in school does not always predict failure in life.

The topic sentence may also be the first and last sentence in a paragraph—"Sandwich style." A "sandwich-style" paragraph is especially helpful to your readers if the paragraph is very long. It also serves as a concluding sentence.

Synonyms

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words “stingy” and “frugal” both mean “careful with money.” However, to call a person stingy is an insult, while the word frugal has a much more positive connotation or implied meaning. Similarly, a person wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive, but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not synonymous at all.

Developing Topic Sentence from General Topic

To write a paragraph about. “Friends” is too large topic for a paragraph, so you need to narrow it to smaller topic. One way to do this is to use **the Idea Listing Technique (ILT)**. Let’s follow the following steps:

Step 1:

Make a list of every word or phrase that comes into your mind about the word “Friends” (words or phrases related to that topic).

Your list might look like this:

Friends

kinds of friends	friends from school
new friends	casual friends
old friends	how to make friends?
best friend what is a friend?	childhood friends

Step 2:

Choose one of the smaller topics (one of the items from your list).

For instance, you might choose “What is a friend?”

Step 3:

Make a second list of words or phrases related to the smaller topic “What is a friend?” while thinking about that topic. Your list might look like this:

What is a Friend?

have fun with is loyal	hang out with can depend on
play sports with ask device	share secrets help each other
can trust enjoy the same activities	share problems like the same movies, sports

Step 4:

Choose the words or phrases you have listed. Any of those ideas (words or phrases) can be the controlling ideas for your topic sentences. For instance, you might choose:

Have fun with

Can trust

Enjoy the same activities

Step 5:

Make topic sentences using the words or phrases you have chosen. Your topic sentences might be as follows:

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A friend is a person you have fun with

A friend is someone you can trust

A friend is a person who enjoys the same activities