

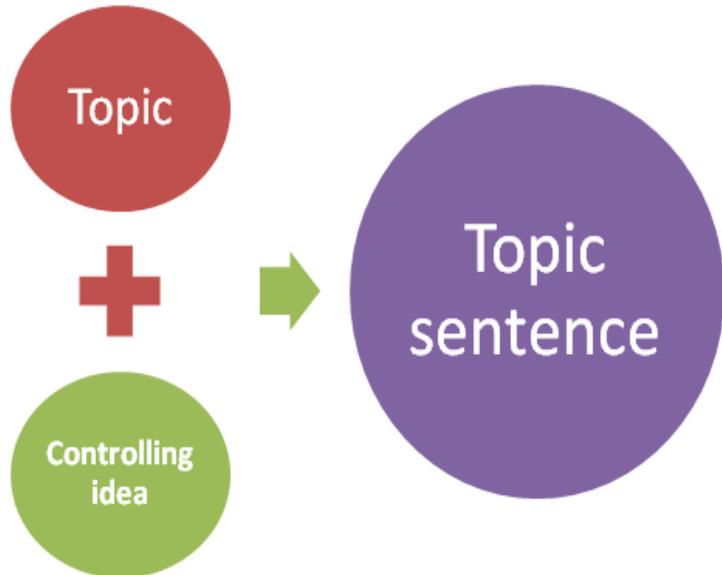


Topic Sentences

In every paragraph there should be a topic sentence that lays out the **main idea** of the paragraph. The topic sentence lets the reader get an idea of what they are about to read and is usually towards the beginning of the paragraph.

Topic Sentences should:

- Link to the thesis
- Introduce the main idea of the paragraph
- Link to the previous paragraph
- Indicate progression of the essay



Tips for Topic Sentences:

1. Think of topic sentences as the **thesis statement** of a paragraph. When writing a thesis, the writer wants to make sure that the reader knows the **main purpose or argument** of the paper. Similar to the thesis statement, the topic sentence will indicate what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
2. When looking at the outline of the paper, take the main ideas and transform them into topic sentences. Then, the sub-points will help support the topic sentence, and will fill out the body.
3. A good topic sentence should state an idea that requires details that will be explained throughout the paragraph.
4. If a topic sentence states a fact, it should express a position or opinion on that fact.
5. The idea of the topic sentence should be limited enough to be able to be discussed in one paragraph.
6. A topic sentence should be a clear and precise statement.

Questions to ask:

- What's going on in the paragraph?
- Why is this paragraph important to the rest of the paper?
- How does this paragraph relate to the thesis?
- What point is trying to be made here?





Transitions:

When constructing topic sentences, transition words make it easy for the reader to understand the sequence of the paper. Transition words and phrases are also helpful since topic sentences should show ideas linking to each other.

Popular Transition words:

- ⇒ **Addition:** also, as well as, besides, furthermore, in addition, similarly, likewise
- ⇒ **Consequence:** accordingly, consequently, otherwise, subsequently, therefore, thus
- ⇒ **Contrast and Comparison:** contrast, conversely, instead, likewise, however, nevertheless
- ⇒ **Similarity:** comparatively, correspondingly, identically, similarly, moreover
- ⇒ **Sequence:** At first, first of all, to begin with, at the same time, for the time being, later on, meanwhile, later, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion
- ⇒ **Summarizing:** after all, all in all, in conclusion, in summary, to sum up, finally

Examples of topic sentences:

Thesis: By creating distinct social classes in *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald sends strong messages about the elitism running throughout every strata of society.

Poor: The first group Fitzgerald attacks is the rich.

Better: Fitzgerald attacks the wealthy class, but first breaks the class down into those born into wealth and those who acquired their wealth.

Poor: People in the middle class can still be happy.

Better: Using Nick as an example, Fitzgerald shows that individuals in the middle class can still find themselves and achieve happiness.

Poor: Many middle class people want to be a part of the wealthy class.

Better: While some people of the middle class are content with their status and find their purpose in life, others dream of becoming a part of the wealthy class, often allowing that dream to consume their lives.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library, or call 815-836-5427.

