

Identifying an Unrelated Sentence

Every sentence in a paragraph has a function. The topic sentence, if the paragraph has one, states the main idea. The other sentences support or give details about that idea. If a sentence does not relate to the main idea, it does not belong in the paragraph.



In the following paragraph, the first sentence states the main idea—how Janine made a good impression. The other sentences should give details about that idea. However, the underlined sentence, while it touches on a related subject, does not develop the main idea. It should be removed.

Janine made a good impression in her job interview. She wore a tasteful gray business suit and sensible shoes. Her handshake was firm and confident. Some people's handshakes are too soft. Her answers, questions, and comments were clear and to the point.

Read the following paragraph. Then choose the correct answer to each question.

Tim and Sarah have named all their children after rock stars. Jimi, the oldest, is named after Jimi Hendrix. He was all-state wrestling champion last year. The twins are named Sonny and Cher. The little girl is named Madonna, though everyone calls her Maddie for short. Just last month they welcomed baby Elvis into the family.

1. What is the main idea of this paragraph?
 - A Children should not be named after celebrities.
 - B The baby's name is Elvis.
 - C One family's children are named after rock stars.
 - D Sonny and Cher were rock stars.
2. Which sentence does not tell more about the main idea?
 - F Jimi, the oldest, is named after Jimi Hendrix.
 - G He was all-state wrestling champion last year.
 - H The twins are named Sonny and Cher.
 - J Just last month they welcomed baby Elvis into the family.

B Practice

Read each paragraph. Cross out the sentence in the paragraph that does not belong. Then answer the two questions that follow.

1. One of America's favorite breakfasts is pancakes. Maple syrup is made from the sap of the sugar maple tree. In spring, the sugary sap flows from the tree's roots and trunk to its branches. Farmers tap into the tree and collect the sap. Then they boil it down to make maple syrup.

What is the main idea of this paragraph? _____

Why should the crossed-out sentence be removed?

2. September has always been Brandon's favorite month. Brandon enjoys the excitement of the opening of the school year. He loves the changing colors of the leaves and the start of football season. Brandon roots for the Pleasanton Pheasants. Finally, Brandon likes September because he was born September 15.

What is the main idea of this paragraph? _____

Why should the crossed-out sentence be removed?

3. Melisa gets most of her clothing at second hand stores. Her favorite dress was first worn during the years when Dwight Eisenhower was president. He had been a World War II general. She has a pair of platform shoes that were popular during the 1970s. The beaded bag that completes the outfit comes from the 1920s.

What is the main idea of this paragraph? _____

Why should the crossed-out sentence be removed?

4. Some people believe that baseball is a dying sport in America. They say that Americans prefer the fast action of football and basketball. As further evidence of baseball's loss of appeal, they point out that young people are playing less baseball and more soccer. In Europe, soccer is called football.

What is the main idea of this paragraph? _____

Why should the crossed-out sentence be removed?

C**Apply**

Read each of the following paragraphs. If all the sentences are related to the main idea, write *Correct* on the line. If one sentence is unrelated, cross it out.

1. The Black Death was a disease that killed millions of people in Europe and Asia during the fourteenth century. It was spread by rat fleas. First the fleas made the rats sick. After the rats died, the fleas jumped to nearby humans. Within hours, a person could die. Many city dwellers see rats in their neighborhoods even today.
- _____

2. Nothing can keep Mariah down. Although her parents did not value education, Mariah was a top student. When they refused to help her with her college bills, she got two jobs to pay her way through school. State colleges are usually cheaper than private ones. Even though it took her six years, she finally graduated from college.
- _____

3. A volcano eruption can be a deadly natural force. In A.D. 79, a volcano erupted in Italy and destroyed the city of Pompeii. In 1902 an eruption killed about 30,000 in Martinique. A 1815 eruption in Indonesia killed 20,000 people. You can see an active volcano in Hawaii.
- _____

4. Driving a race car takes great concentration. When you are moving at 150 miles per hour, accidents can happen quickly. You are making turns every few seconds, so you can't let your mind wander even for a moment. Other drivers may pull into your path, so you must always know where they are and how fast they are going.
- _____

5. American cities are getting bigger all the time. City limits are creeping ever-outward. People are moving to new, outer suburbs and abandoning old city centers. Philadelphia is a historic city in Pennsylvania. This expansion is called urban sprawl.
- _____

D**Check Up**

Read each paragraph. Then choose the sentence that does not belong.

1. 1. Nicole volunteers at the community hunger center once a month. 2. There she fills shopping bags with non-perishable food items. 3. Value Market has some of the best deals on canned goods. 4. She hands out the bags to needy people who take them home to feed their families.
 - A Sentence 1
 - B Sentence 2
 - C Sentence 3
 - D Sentence 4

2. 1. The Amish live in the modern world but are not part of it. 2. They are not allowed to use electricity. 3. They may not watch television. 4. They travel using horses and buggies. 5. Some Amish men are excellent carpenters.
 - F Sentence 1
 - G Sentence 3
 - H Sentence 4
 - J Sentence 5

3. 1. Nadia has a strange ability. 2. If you give her almost any date, she can tell you what day of the week it falls on. 3. The Western world uses the Gregorian calendar. 4. She can repeat this feat for any date from 1950 to 2050.
 - A Sentence 1
 - B Sentence 2
 - C Sentence 3
 - D Sentence 4

4. 1. Many people suffer from unexplained, senseless fears called phobias. 2. The *ph* in phobia sounds like *f*. 3. People with claustrophobia can't stand enclosed spaces. 4. People who fear spiders suffer from arachnophobia.
 - F Sentence 1
 - G Sentence 2
 - H Sentence 3
 - J Sentence 4