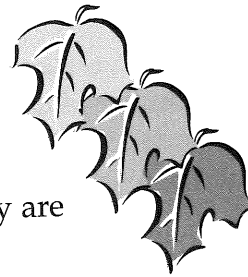


Finding the Topic Sentence

Many writers use a topic sentence to communicate the main idea of a paragraph. When placed at the beginning of the paragraph, as it is in the example below, a topic sentence leads readers into the content of the paragraph. It gives readers a clear sense of what they are about to read.



The day spa downtown offers a variety of ways for you to pamper yourself. For example, it offers several types of body massage, including Swedish massage and Shiatsu. You can try aromatherapy to soothe your nerves or a salt scrub to stimulate your nervous system. If you want to concentrate on pampering particular parts of your body, you can get a facial, a manicure, or a pedicure. If the spa weren't so expensive, I'd be there every day!

After reading the topic sentence, readers expect that the paragraph will give details about the services offered at the spa.

Sometimes, a topic sentence is placed in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. The reader has already read the details of the paragraph, and the topic sentence summarizes or reinforces these details.

The sun has been setting a little earlier each day. The air is a bit chilly in the mornings and at night. People are starting to bring out their sweaters and light jackets. Some of the leaves have begun to turn yellow and red. Yesterday, I saw apple cider for sale by the side of the road. It seems that autumn has arrived.

Underline the topic sentence in each of the following paragraphs.

1. Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera were both painters. Kahlo is best known for her colorful self-portraits. Rivera is famous for painting large murals that celebrate Mexico's history and its working class. Kahlo and Rivera were both politically active and were committed to Marxism. They experienced a great deal of turmoil in their personal lives, including a devastating streetcar accident that seriously injured Kahlo and their well-publicized marital problems. Surely, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera are one of the most interesting couples in Mexican history.
2. Falling in love and catching the flu have a lot in common. Both love and the flu usually arrive unexpectedly, taking over your life for a while. Your stomach rejects food, making it difficult or impossible to eat. It becomes hard to concentrate on work, or even on a book or a movie. You toss and turn in bed all night; when you do manage to sleep, you have strange, feverish dreams.

B**Practice**

Read each paragraph below. Choose its topic sentence.

1. All her life, Susana has been keeping other people's secrets. When she was young, she dutifully hid her older sisters' mischief from her parents. At school, friends always confessed their secret crushes to her, knowing their secrets would be safe. For many years in Hollywood, Susana worked as a personal assistant to movie stars. She had to sign contracts promising not to give out information about the movie stars to anyone. Now she works for the government, but she won't tell us exactly what she does.
 - A For many years in Hollywood, Susana worked as a personal assistant to movie stars.
 - B Now she works for the government, but she won't tell us exactly what she does.
 - C At school, friends always confessed their secret crushes to her, knowing their secrets would be safe.
 - D All her life, Susana has been keeping other people's secrets.

2. The ancient Mayan people built awe-inspiring pyramids from stones that must have been hauled hundreds or thousands of miles. Today, we have no idea how they managed to do that. The calendar developed by the Mayans was more precise than the one we use today. It is thought by some that the Mayan drawings widely believed to picture human sacrifice are actually depicting the world's first heart surgeries. While we can't make dental fillings that last more than twenty years or so, a Mayan skull has been found with fillings still in its teeth after thousands of years. The Mayans were so advanced that we still haven't caught up with all of their technology.
 - F The ancient Mayan people built awe-inspiring pyramids from stones that must have been hauled hundreds or thousands of miles.
 - G The calendar developed by the Mayans was more precise than the one we use today.
 - H The Mayans were so advanced that we still haven't caught up with all of their technology.
 - J It is thought by some that the Mayan drawings widely believed to picture human sacrifice are actually depicting the world's first heart surgeries.

C Apply

Write a topic sentence for each of the following paragraphs.

1. _____ . You should wear eye protection to prevent a sliver of wood from flying into your eye. Safety goggles or a clear plastic face shield will work as protection. You should also wear a dust mask to avoid inhaling too much sawdust. Always be aware of where your hands are in relation to the moving blade. When using a table saw or a band saw, use a pushstick to guide the wood, rather than letting your hands get too close to the blade.
-
-

2. The reservoir was running low. The streets all looked dry and dusty, and the grass in the park was withered. Residents were no longer allowed to water their lawns. People were stocking their kitchens with gallons of bottled water. The mayor asked that people do whatever they could to conserve water. _____ .
-
-

3. _____ . If Karen loves a certain book or painting, chances are that Jonas hates it. At the movies, Karen loves romantic films while Jonas won't watch anything without lots of guns and car chases. They have opposing political views, and they never vote for the same candidate in an election. They can't even agree on how in the world they got to be friends.
-
-

4. There was no one at the front desk when we arrived, and we had to wait in the lobby for fifteen minutes. Then we discovered that they had gotten our reservation wrong. When we were finally shown to our room, we were horrified to see a cockroach scurrying across the floor. Our windows opened onto a noisy and trash-filled alley. The shower was just a cold trickle of water, and the drain was clogged with hair. _____ .
-
-

D**Check Up**

Read each paragraph below. Choose its topic sentence.

1. Many families throw away plastic, glass, and paper products that could easily be recycled. As a nation, we generate a huge amount of trash and don't know what to do with it. Our landfills are becoming too large to handle. Much of our soil is becoming polluted. _____.
 - A Individually and collectively, we need to put more effort into recycling.
 - B Our country needs to build larger landfills.
 - C The trash collection industry is growing in leaps and bounds.
 - D When given the choice, you should always opt for a plastic grocery bag.

2. Mamma Mia's has just added an "open microphone" Monday night to their popular weekly music schedule. _____. Customers have already become hooked on Folk Music Tuesday and Jazz Wednesday. Thursday is salsa night, complete with dance instruction for those who arrive early enough. Weekends are filled with fun, too. On Fridays, local rock bands are spotlighted, and Saturday nights are reserved for the performances of major national acts.
 - F You can improve your dancing at Mamma Mia's.
 - G Mamma Mia's is closed on Sundays.
 - H Now Mamma Mia's offers something different every night of the week.
 - J Mamma Mia's is named for a song by the Swedish pop group Abba.

3. College students from all over the world come and spend six months as volunteers for the Children's Aid program. They claim that they'll never forget the wonderful experience of building schools and teaching in them. The local residents have really enjoyed getting to know the volunteers, whom they treat as guests. The children are thrilled by all of the attention, and their parents are thrilled about the great education. _____.
 - A College programs can offer unique ways for young people to travel.
 - B It takes a lot of money to build a school.
 - C The Children's Aid program is getting great reviews from everyone involved.
 - D The Children's Aid program was founded in 1986.