



Topic Sentences

Whereas a thesis statement expresses the central argument or claim of a paper, a topic sentence begins each body paragraph with a point in support of this larger thesis. Topic sentences provide an essay with structure and organization by breaking break down the thesis argument into a series of smaller claims.

An Effective Topic Sentence Should

- **Be a sub-point of the thesis.**

It should discuss, in greater specificity, a point discussed or implied by the thesis statement.

- **Set up your claim.**

Each topic sentence should explicitly establish a claim that the paragraph will prove.

- **Transition.**

A strong topic sentence connects or relates to the previous point.

- **Be your idea.**

The topic sentence should be a point you make, not a point from one of your sources.

Tips for Writing Topic Sentences

Construct a "mini thesis statement."

If a thesis is a road map to a paper, then a topic sentence is a guidepost for a paragraph. Think of each topic sentence as a mini thesis, organizing and enabling the development of each paragraph in a paper. It should be a clear, specific, focused, and arguable claim.

Incorporate vocabulary from your thesis.

Incorporating some of the same words or language from the thesis statement into a topic sentence can give the argument a sense of coherence. Doing so can also show the reader how a particular point relates to the larger thesis.

Make a topic sentence outline.

To ensure that topic sentences function as sub-points of your thesis, copy and paste all of your topic sentences into a blank document. If these topic sentences create an outline of the paper and a roadmap for the entire argument, then they are functioning correctly. If they do not, then identify the places where topic sentences should be revised to more accurately reflect the content of the argument.

Examples of Effective Topic Sentences

Sample Thesis: Throughout the article, Philip R. Reilly uses a variety of pathos, ethos, and logos appeals in order to make the reader question his or her own understandings of certain scientific issues, such as gene mapping and genetically modified foods.

Sample Topic Sentences:

- Although mainly using logos appeals to support his claim, Reilly uses pathos appeals to grab the reader's attention by portraying the public's misunderstandings of genetic engineering.
- Reilly depends on the reader's emotions in several circumstances involving the media's misconstrued information in the public discourse of scientific information.
- Although pathos appeals are present, logos appeals are the primary form of rhetorical appeal used throughout Reilly's article.