

consider the medical facts of the disease and some steps being taken to prevent its spread.

3. Michael Lemonick writes in *Scientific American* that "The basic proposition behind the science of climate change is so firmly rooted in the laws of physics that no reasonable person can dispute it." If that is the case, why is there so much controversy about the concept of global warming? Why do many scientists, politicians, and ordinary people deny that the earth is heating up? The naysayers offer many explanations for their position, but, as we can see, these are largely false.
4. A young boy cowers in the corner whenever he enters a room full of adults. A little girl refuses to talk with her teacher, the school nurse, or the principal. A five-year-old boy refuses assistance from a park attendant as he tries to climb onto the jungle gym. A red-haired, big-eyed seven-year-old girl would rather eat lunch alone than join a group of "grown-ups." Are these children simply cautious? No, they are the fearful victims of child abuse. Fortunately, a national campaign to alert the public about the horrors of child abuse is now under way.
5. In this essay, I will write about my summer vacation house. My first paragraph will show what the house looks like. Then I will tell about our annual Fourth of July party there and how I learned that love makes the world go round.

Writing the Body Paragraphs

The **body** of a paper provides support for the thesis presented in the introduction. Body paragraphs develop the writing plan or outline and should lead readers logically from one section to another without causing confusion.

Writing Topic Sentences

One method of leading your reader is to write clear topic sentences for each paragraph. A **topic sentence** is to a paragraph what a thesis is to a paper: it expresses the central idea of the paragraph. The remainder of the paragraph gives support for the topic sentence.

Stated Topic Sentences

Topic sentences generally appear at the beginning of a paragraph, but they can appear anywhere in a paragraph.

Topic Sentence at the Beginning

Mrs. Jackson, my landlady's mother, is very nosy. No matter how many times I descend the stairs in one day, I always find Mrs. Jackson peeking out her front door. Usually she makes some statement or asks some

question: "You really get around a lot. I guess you're going to the grocery now, huh?" I must give an explanation, denial, or confirmation of her guess—rather loudly, I might add, because of her hearing problem. Whenever company calls, that person too is detained and cross-examined on the first floor. "Who are you going to see?" "Are you a relative?" "I guess you've known her a long time." Never does a visitor get up the stairs without first conversing with Mrs. Jackson.

Topic Sentence at the End

He drank noisily and chewed with his mouth open. He made loud, vulgar comments to the waitress, who had difficulty hiding her anger as other customers turned to stare. His idea of conversation was to regale his date with statistics about the World Series or facts about his expensive new car—especially its expense. *An hour with Bruce in the city's most costly restaurant made Jane wish she had dined at home alone on a tuna fish sandwich.*

Topic Sentence in the Middle

A fire-warning detector will "smell" smoke and sound an alarm; a guided missile will "see" and pursue a radar echo or the hot engines of a bomber; a speed governor will "feel" when a shaft is spinning too fast and act to restrain it. *But . . . quotation marks are appropriate in all such cases, because these machines do not have minds and they do not perceive the world as human beings do.* Information from our eyes, ears, and other senses goes to our brains, and of some of it (by no means all) we are aware as a vivid part of our conscious experience, showing us the world we inhabit.

—Nigel Calder, *The Mind of Man*

Implied Topic Sentences

On rare occasions, writers do not state the topic sentence directly at all; instead, they imply it:

Implied Topic Sentence

Often when I find some passage in a book especially impressive—especially bright, say, or especially moving—I find myself turning to the dust jacket, if the author's picture is there, to communicate, to say a kind of "Well done." Coretta Scott King's photograph, soft, shadowed, and

Thesis:
Untraditional
students face
problems of time
management,
transportation,
and balancing
family and
school.

Topic sentence
of second
paragraph:
introduces the
hardship that
this paragraph
will present.
Note effective
link between
topic sentence
and thesis.

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lovely, is on the jacket of her book *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* I must have turned to it a dozen times in the reading of this book.

Here, the paragraph's central idea—that Coretta Scott King's book *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* is especially impressive—is so clear that a statement of it is unnecessary; indeed, to state it directly would mar the grace of the paragraph. Implied topic sentences are tricky, though; use them cautiously. An idea that seems quite clear to you may not be as clear to your reader.

In summary, a topic sentence states the central idea of the paragraph. Whenever you decide to put your topic sentence, keep your readers in mind. They should not experience any confusion in following your thought. The central idea of every paragraph must be clear enough to lead readers easily from one point of your paper to another.

One Student Writing: Topic Sentences

MyWritingLab

In the following student paper, Charles DeMarco identifies a number of problems faced by college students. Notice how the topic sentences move the ideas along.

Charles DeMarco College Hardships

With the economy at a low point again, a number of barriers can face independent college students, which can prevent them from becoming successful in obtaining a college degree. Unlike traditional students, who attend a college or a university on scholarship programs, or students whose parents can foot the total cost of tuition, these students are challenged with economic hardships. Untraditional students can face such obstacles as having to work while enrolled in college, lacking transportation to their courses, or balancing efforts to raise a family with college demands.

First, students working at a full-time job while attending college face severe time restrictions. When students have full-time jobs, they usually have to work no less than 40 hours a week. If a student is working and attending college full-time, class time generally equals no less than 12 hours a week. The rule of thumb for success at school is that for every hour of college classes taken, 3–4 hours of homework or study time is required per week. Don't let 12 hours of college classes sound easy: 40 hours of work a week, 12 hours of classes a week, and 24–36 hours of study time

Thesis:
Untraditional students face problems of time management, transportation, and balancing family and school.

Topic sentence of second paragraph: introduces the hardship that this paragraph will present. Note effective link between topic sentence and thesis.

1

Introduction establishes issue of barriers to college success.

2

Supporting details identify the nature of the time issues students may face.

or homework a week are an extraordinary challenge. This schedule leaves little time for family or leisure. Forget about a morning jog around campus or an hour with a favorite television program! Time management, therefore, is a major problem many college students face.

Topic sentence 3
of third
paragraph

Second, inconvenient transportation options form a barrier many students may encounter, and that causes difficulty commuting to school. If students do not live along a bus line, have access to public transportation, or carpool with students who drive and attend the same institution, this problem will keep them from arriving at school on time, if at all on some days. Also, paying for the commute is a challenge for financially strapped students. In addition, many students may live far away and spend large amounts of time getting to class. One student in psych lecture travels two hours each way to reach a nine o'clock class twice a week. Two hours each way! So, transportation is a real problem for many college students today.

Supporting
details identify
specific
transportation
issues for
students.

4

Last, a student who also is a parent may face other difficulties while trying to earn a degree. With the divorce rate soaring sky high, many students are single parents and have financial hardships. Parents who work full-time and attend college also may feel as if they are neglecting their children. Getting adequate child care is a gnawing problem. In some cases, where both parents are present and working, their children may not be eligible for child care. Often, two salaries added together exceed income guidelines, so agencies have to deny daycare services, which further compounds the problem of college attendance. One of the requirements reflected in the policies enforced by Departments of Health and Human Resources is that child care will be available only to individuals who have a low enough income to qualify. With no one to watch a toddler at home, forget about working toward a degree. Fortunately, some colleges offer child care without federal or state restrictions, and the services are very helpful to those students with children.

Supporting
details
explain family
obstacles.

5

Therefore, obtaining a college degree becomes a very hard task for students who are trying to work and attend classes, commute back and forth to college, and raise a family. These factors make attending college difficult to some and impossible for others. When deciding to attend college, students need to take into account the various obstacles that may face them. College is something a person has to want passionately and has to work at very hard in order to succeed!

Topic
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FOR WRITING OR DISCUSSION

MyWritingLab

1. What is the thesis of the paper?
2. Do the topic sentences give you a good idea of the problems some students face? Why, or why not?
3. Which problem do you think is most serious? In which paragraph is this problem best presented?
4. Why do you think that the writer has chosen to present his paper in the third person?
5. What does the topic sentence of the last paragraph contribute to your impression of the three problems?

Topic sentence
of fourth
paragraph

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Form groups and examine the following short paragraphs, both of which lack a topic sentence. As a group, develop a logical topic sentence for each. Then report your topic sentence and compare it with those written by other groups.

1. Jason's room is always in a shambles because he never bothers to pick up after himself. His clothes, schoolbooks, and other papers are on the floor, on his bed, and every place else. He never bothers to take dishes back to the kitchen. He just lets them pile up, and he won't lift a finger to tidy up his room until he is literally threatened. Jason is so lazy that when he is watching television, rather than change the channel, he'll just watch the same station all evening, even if he doesn't like the programs. He even walks around with his shoes untied because he is too lazy to bend over and tie them. Sometimes it seems he may be too lazy to breathe.
2. Many students enter college with poor reading and writing skills. During their first year of college they need special courses designed to elevate their language competence, although they should have achieved a reasonably high level in high school. In addition, teachers often criticize first-year college students for their inability to think critically. What, college teachers wonder, have students done during four years of high school? What books have they read? What writing have they done? Have they not analyzed books, films, events?