

WRITING STRONG TOPIC SENTENCES

The **topic sentence** is usually the first sentence of a paragraph. It introduces the **main idea** of the paragraph in a **single statement** and often uses one of the **key words** from the thesis.

Strong topic sentences improve your paper's organization and flow.

UNDERSTANDING TOPIC SENTENCES

1. **Think of a topic sentence as a “mini-thesis statement” or “mini introduction”** – Just as a thesis statement lets the reader know what to expect throughout the paper, a topic sentence lets the reader know what to expect throughout the paragraph.
2. **A topic sentence uses key words, usually connecting to the thesis statement** – In a five-paragraph essay, the topic sentence of each paragraph will correspond to one of the supporting points of the thesis statement.
3. **A topic sentence is a general statement that captures a main point, like the “umbrella” that encompasses the rest of the paragraph’s content** – Usually, you should not begin your paragraph with a minor detail, fact, or statistic. Instead, open your paragraph with its main point.
4. **Topic sentences often begin with a transition word/phrase to make a smooth transition from the previous paragraph and remind the reader where you are in your argument** – e.g., *first, second, in addition, moreover, on the other hand, finally, or in conclusion*.
5. **Reviewing just the topic sentences of a paper should give the reader a “skeleton” outline of the whole paper and a clear understanding of its arguments** – You can check the organization and logic of your paper by creating a “reverse outline” from your topic sentences.

EXAMPLES

*KEY

TERMS BOLDED

Thesis statement: **Consumers** prefer **waffles** to **pancakes** because of their **density**, **texture**, and **flavor**.

Topic sentence #1: First, **consumers** prefer the airy **density** of **waffles** to the heaviness of **pancakes**.

Topic sentence #2: **Consumers** also enjoy the **texture** of **waffles** over **pancakes**, due to the shape created by the waffle iron and the crispiness of their edges.

Topic sentence #3: Lastly, with their whipped egg whites and vanilla extract, **waffles** offer **consumers** a superior **flavor** to that of **pancakes**.

TOPIC SENTENCE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Is my topic sentence a general statement that captures a main idea to support my thesis statement?
- ✓ Do I use consistent key words between the thesis statement and my topic sentence?
- ✓ Does the order of my topic sentences follow the same order as the points in my thesis statement?
- ✓ Does this paragraph's topic sentence flow logically from the content of the previous paragraph?
- ✓ Do I need a transition word in my topic sentence to make my shift to this paragraph's topic smoother or clearer?
- ✓ If the first sentence of my paragraph is currently a specific detail, fact, or statistic, is there another sentence in my paragraph that better summarizes the overall point of my paragraph?
- ✓ Does the topic sentence avoid unnecessary phrases or phrases that explain the rationale of the topic sentence?
- ✓ Does everything within this paragraph fit logically under the "umbrella" of my topic sentence?

PRACTICE NOW