

Topic Sentences

What is a topic sentence?

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates the main idea or thesis of a paragraph. You might think of it as a signpost for your readers -- or a headline -- something that alerts them to the most important, interpretive points in your essay. When read in sequence, your essay's topic sentences will provide a sketch of the essay's argument. Topic sentences usually appear at the very beginning of paragraphs. Sometimes they will be preceded by a few transition sentences and sometimes they occur later in the paragraph. However, the beginning of a paragraph is typically the most logical place to include a topic sentence.

Purposes of a topic sentence

1. To alert the reader to the topic or 'main point' of the paragraph
2. To signify how the writer will approach the topic or main point of the paragraph
3. To support the author's thesis statement

Examples of topic sentences

Because topic sentences connect to and provide evidence for or explanation of the essay's thesis statement, it is important to view them as being linked together. The following are some examples of topic sentences and the thesis statements they connect to:

Example 1:

Thesis: Although Aaliyah and Beyoncé are frequently compared, there are clear distinctions in their chart history, performance style, and music techniques.

Topic Sentence 1: Despite their similarities, Beyoncé has achieved a significantly greater degree of chart success than Aaliyah.

Topic Sentence 2: Although they are both R&B icons, there are important differences between the performance styles of Aaliyah and Beyoncé.

Topic Sentence 3: In addition, both Aaliyah and Beyoncé incorporate distinct musical techniques on their respective albums and singles.

Example 2:

Thesis: In the music video "This Is America," Childish Gambino illustrates how gun violence, police brutality, and black on black crime is prevalent yet overlooked in America.

Topic Sentence 1: Rampant gun violence plagues the United States and represents a major theme for Childish Gambino in "This Is America."

Topic Sentence 2: Childish Gambino offers an interesting interpretation and depiction of police brutality in his hit song and music video "This Is America."

Topic Sentence 3: Black on black crime is presented in Childish Gambino's own unique way in "This Is America."

Example 3:

Thesis: When weighing all factors, an electric vehicle is the best option for a new car buyer when compared to non-electric options.

Topic Sentence 1: One factor that makes an electric vehicle superior to other vehicle types is its positive impact on the environment.

Topic Sentence 2: Electric vehicles are slightly more expensive than gas vehicles initially, but an electric vehicle owner will save money in the long-term.

Topic Sentence 3: Electric vehicles offer features not available in other non-electric models.

Important points

- A topic sentence has a subject (the topic you will write about) and a treatment (how you will approach your subject, your perspective of the subject).
- A topic sentence should not be a quote. It should be your own idea expressed in your own words. Use quotes for support.
- Make sure to use specific words in your topic sentence. A topic sentence should avoid words that are vague, general, or otherwise unclear.