

Hello, students. My name is Dr. Martina Shabram, and I will be your instructor for today's lesson. I'm genuinely excited to teach you these concepts. So let's get started.

So what are we learning today? This lesson is going to discuss topic sentences, what they are, how they fit in a paragraph, and how to write and revise for the most effective possible topic sentence in any writing challenge.

If we're going to talk about topic sentences, we need to start by talking about paragraphs. So let's review the basic structure of a paragraph. You'll recall that a paragraph is one unit or chunk of writing that's meant to cover one main idea in full. Usually a paragraph is part of a larger piece of writing, and it is distinguished from other paragraphs by having either the first line indented or by having a blank line separating it from the paragraphs above or below.

And since a paragraph is meant to cover just central idea, paragraphs are usually between three and seven sentences, which might be roughly 100 to 200 words or so. And a paragraph isn't just any sentences thrown together. There is a structure, which usually looks something like this.

So we know that a topic sentence begins a paragraph. Well, what's a topic sentence then? A topic sentence is a sentence that captures the main point or controlling idea of a paragraph. A controlling idea is just the main idea around which the whole paragraph revolves. It's the purpose of the paragraph. So every other sentence is designed to support and develop that main controlling idea.

Let's look at a paragraph and discuss the topic sentence. Here is our topic sentence. See how it announces what the paragraph is going to be about? It's almost like a title telling us what to expect from this paragraph. For this reason, topic sentences are usually, though not always, the first sentence in a paragraph. And that way, readers are introduced to the paragraph through this topic sentence.

So now you know what a topic sentence is, and it's time to learn how to write a strong and effective one. There are a few guidelines to keep in mind when writing a topic sentence. You'll want to be sure that you introduce the main idea of the paragraph, and you'll want to avoid being either too broad or too narrow. If your topic sentence is too broad, your readers won't know what to expect from the paragraph. If it's too narrow, your readers will only know to expect one aspect of the paragraph. So try to focus in on the topic and what the supporting sentences will do. Then summarize that as the topic sentence.

Let's look at an example paragraph and see what a topic sentence might look like. Here we have a

topic sentence that's too narrow. See how it doesn't actually introduce the material that the paragraph covers? It's not effectively providing a summary of what this whole paragraph is about, just of one of the points.

Now, here is a topic sentence that's too broad. Notice how big this idea is. Do you think we could sufficiently cover all of the material this introduces in a mere three to seven sentences? No way. And do we know specifically that this paragraph is going to be about dress codes? Nope. So a topic sentence that's too broad will usually require several paragraphs to explain all of its material and thus should be narrowed down to address just the main point of this paragraph.

So what should the topic sentence of this paragraph be? Here are three options. Which do you think is the best or most effective topic sentence? Right. This one, it's too broad. More productive in what way? And this one, too narrow. Community is just one of the points. But this one, well, that introduces the paragraph effectively by announcing the main point and fully addressing both elements of the content of this paragraph.

All right, now it's your turn. Here is a paragraph that's missing its topic sentence. Pause and read through. Then decide what you think the main idea of this paragraph is. Press play when you have your answer. So what do you think the central controlling idea of this paragraph is? Well, if I were to write a topic sentence announcing the controlling idea of this paragraph, I might write-- what do you think?

All right, now you've written a topic sentence. What an important first step. But sometimes after you've written a topic sentence and then a full paragraph, you might realize that what you wrote in the paragraph has transformed in the process of writing and no longer matches that topic sentence. Perhaps you realized that you had a more narrow focus as you wrote or perhaps you changed your opinion in the process of writing. That isn't a bad thing. In fact, it's great because writing is a process, not a product, and it should include rethinking, revising, and rewriting. However, it does mean that you will need to revise your topic sentence so that it remains aligned with the content of your paragraph.

So let's practice revision then. Here we have a revised paragraph about dinner parties. Obviously, the content of the paragraph is a little different than the original topic sentence suggests. So how should we revise this topic sentence? Here are some options. Which do you like best?

Option number one and three, well, those are a little too broad. Likewise, numbers two and four, they are too specific. They're not covering everything. Number five, however, explains that this paragraph

will specifically cover the issue of sharing the menu with dinner guests in order to make sure that they feel comfortable at your party. So I would choose number five.

All right, what did we learn today? We discussed topic sentences in detail, starting with how they fit into paragraph structure, then addressing strategies for writing effective topic sentences, and, finally, practicing revising the topic sentences if and when the content of the paragraph shifts. Well, students, I hope you had as much fun as I did. Thank you.