



DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Topic Sentences

A **topic sentence** is a statement at the beginning of each body paragraph, indicates the topic of the entire paragraph, and reflects one of the main points of the thesis statement.

Organizational Elements of a Topic Sentence

Main Point + Details

An effective topic sentence expands on a main thesis point by including details and explanation. It has two organizational purposes: it must relate back to the thesis statement, and it must summarize the paragraph.

Topic Sentence Examples

An effective topic sentence is like a mini-thesis statement for each paragraph.

Example Thesis: *Health-conscious individuals should consider substituting strawberries for desserts because strawberries are healthy, sweet, and versatile.*

A well-written topic sentence that might follow this thesis statement should include the first main point: strawberries are healthy.

Example Topic Sentence: *Strawberries are a healthy substitute for desserts because they have a much lower carbohydrate count and are rich in nutrients and fiber.* Notice that the topic sentence includes the first main point of the thesis statement, but expands on the idea with further details.

Main point derived from thesis: *Strawberries are a healthy substitute for desserts*

Details that define the subject of the paragraph: *because they have a much lower carbohydrate count and are rich in nutrients and fiber*

Example Topic Sentence: *Strawberries are an enjoyable substitute for desserts because their sweet, juicy taste can satisfy a craving for sugar.*

The rest of the paragraph should be about how the sweet taste of strawberries compares to sugary desserts. The main points that relate to the health benefits of strawberries or the variety of ways to eat them would not be mentioned, because they would be discussed in different paragraphs.

Advances Theses

Not all papers will have a three point thesis statement. If this is the case, the topic sentence may not contain a word-for-word point stated in the thesis statement.

Example Thesis statement: *The literary techniques used by Leo Tolstoy in The Death of Ivan Ilych unveil an extraordinary sense of depth within the novella that is imperative to truly understanding Tolstoy's ideas.*

Example Topic Sentence: *When Leo Tolstoy employs the technique of symbolism, inanimate objects like Ivan's golden pocket watch and the drapes on his windows convey hidden meanings that further clarify important themes in the story.*

Clearly, this paragraph is going to discuss the symbolism of Ivan Ilych's pocket watch and his window drapes; notice that this was not mentioned in the thesis statement. However, *literary techniques were mentioned in the thesis statement*, and consequently the following paragraph discusses one of those literary techniques: symbolism. Therefore, it is not always necessary to have a three point thesis that contains the main point of each following topic sentence.