



## Topic Sentences

A **topic sentence** is a statement that briefly describes the point and the content of a paragraph, usually relating the paragraph to the work's **thesis statement**.

When writing a paragraph, the writer should begin by creating a **topic sentence** that states a **controlling idea**. The topic sentence helps the writer to focus on what she/he needs to include in the paragraph and what should be left out of the paragraph.

- Each paragraph should cover **one** topic. The **controlling idea** tells the reader what the paragraph will be about.

Example: *My dog is loyal.*

- The rest of the paragraph, then, should **demonstrate, illustrate, and/or describe** the dog's loyalty to the reader by relating supporting evidence, examples, and descriptions of this characteristic.

Example: My dog is loyal. She always sticks close by my side when we're out playing and she obeys my commands even when around other pets and humans. She seems to understand my emotions and stays nearby when I'm sad or sick, almost as if she wants to help take care of me. In fact, the last time I had the flu, my dog slept right by the couch, only going outside to potty, for two whole days. Over the years she has become my most loyal companion.

In the end, a well-written paragraph should convey its **controlling idea** by using details to demonstrate, illustrate, and/or describe the subject. Details help the reader to **imagine** and **visualize** the subject vividly (whether it be a dog, a building, or even a specific experience).

As you're writing paragraphs, remember to include strong topic sentences that:

- establish one controlling idea for that entire paragraph (and be sure the paragraph sticks to that one idea),
- relate the paragraph's controlling idea back to the paper's overall thesis, and
- include a **transition word/phrase** to move from one controlling idea (one paragraph) to the next.

Reynolds, Ed and Marcia Huntington. *Confidence in Writing*. 4th Ed. Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 2002.

Odell, Lee and Susan M. Katz. *Writing Now: Shaping Words and Images*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010