

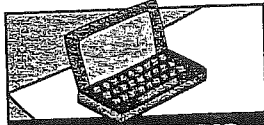
How to Write a Title

Single paragraphs do not usually have titles. Giving your practice paragraphs titles, however, may help you to organize and limit your thoughts. For longer essays or reports, though, the use of titles will become more necessary.

A title tells the reader what the topic of the paragraph is. It is usually a word or phrase, not a sentence. It should be brief, but not so brief that it doesn't tell the reader what to expect.

Remember these points when writing a title:

1. The first, last, and all important words in a title are capitalized. Prepositions and articles are not considered important words in a title. Prepositions of more than five letters, however, may be capitalized. Articles that begin the title, of course, are capitalized.
2. The title of a paragraph or essay is not underlined.
3. The title is not enclosed in quotation marks, nor is it ended with a period.



COMPUTER TIP

Use the centering icon to center the title of your writing at the top of the page.

My Greatest Culture Shock
How to Choose a Good Used Car

The Effects of Inflation
Riding the Subway in New York

The Topic Sentence

Every good paragraph has a topic sentence, which clearly states the topic and the controlling idea of the paragraph. It is a complete sentence. It is usually (but not always) the first sentence in the paragraph.

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It briefly indicates what the paragraph is going to discuss. For this reason, the topic sentence is a helpful guide to both the writer and the reader. The writer can see what information to include (and what information to exclude). The reader can see what the paragraph is going to be about and is, therefore, better prepared to understand it.

There are three important points to remember about a topic sentence.

1. A topic sentence is a *complete sentence*; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement. The following are *not* complete sentences:
 - Driving on freeways.
 - The importance of gold.
 - How to register for college classes.
2. A topic sentence contains both a *topic* and a *controlling idea*. It names the topic and then limits the topic to a specific area to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph. The following examples show how a topic sentence states both the topic and the controlling idea in a complete sentence:
 - Driving on freeways requires skill and alertness.
 - Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.
 - Registering for college classes can be a frustrating experience for new students.

3. A topic sentence is the most general statement in the paragraph because it gives only the main idea. It does not give any specific details.

The following is an example of a general statement that could serve as a topic sentence:

The Arabic origin of many English words is not always obvious.

The following sentence, on the other hand, is too specific:

The slang expression *so long* (meaning “goodbye”) is probably a corruption of the Arabic *salaam*.

Sentences such as the following may be too general:

English is a difficult language to learn.

Position of Topic Sentences

The topic sentence may be the first or last sentence in a paragraph. The topic sentence may also be the first *and* last sentence of the paragraph—“sandwich-style.” A sandwich-style paragraph is especially helpful to your reader if the paragraph is very long. The second topic sentence in the sandwich-style paragraph also serves as a concluding sentence.

Study the following three paragraphs. Notice the different positions for the topic sentence in each. The topic sentences are underlined.

MODEL

Position of Topic Sentences

Hurricanes

Hurricanes, which are also called cyclones, exert tremendous power.

These violent storms are often a hundred miles in diameter, and their winds can reach velocities¹ of seventy-five miles per hour or more. Furthermore, the strong winds and heavy rainfall that accompany them can completely destroy a small town in a couple of hours. The energy that is released by a hurricane in one day exceeds the total energy consumed by humankind throughout the world in one year.

Medical Miracles to Come

By the year 2009, a vaccine² against the common cold will have been developed. By the same year, the first human will have been successfully cloned.³ By the year 2014, parents will be able to create designer children. Genetic therapy will be able to manipulate genes for abilities, intelligence, and hair, eye, and skin color. By 2020, most diseases will be able to be diagnosed and treated at home, and by 2030, cancer and heart disease will have been wiped out. These are just a few examples of medical miracles that are expected in the next few decades.

Synonyms

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words *stingy* and *frugal* both mean “careful with money.” However, to call a person *stingy* is an insult, while the word *frugal* has a much more positive connotation.⁴ Similarly, a person wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonymous at all.

¹ **velocities:** speeds

² **vaccine:** substance that prevents a specific disease such as smallpox or polio

³ **cloned:** made an exact copy of

⁴ **connotation:** positive or negative meaning

PRACTICE I*Recognizing Topic Sentences*

Remember, the topic sentence indicates the main idea of a paragraph and is the most general statement in the paragraph.

- STEP 1** Decide which of the following sentences is the topic sentence of the paragraph.
- STEP 2** Write TS on the line next to that sentence.
- STEP 3** Decide the order of the supporting sentences and number them SS1, SS2, SS3, and so on.

Paragraph 1

- _____ a. It enables customers to do several banking transactions twenty-four hours a day.
- _____ b. In addition, a customer can transfer funds between accounts or get a cash advance on a credit card.
- _____ c. An automated teller machine (ATM) is a convenient miniature bank.
- _____ d. For example, a customer can use an ATM to deposit money and withdraw a limited amount of cash.

Paragraph 2

- _____ a. After an attack by a great white, 462 stitches were required to sew up an Australian scuba diver.
- _____ b. With their razor-sharp teeth and strong jaws, great white sharks are very dangerous.
- _____ c. Nevertheless, one did just that near a public beach in Australia in 1985.
- _____ d. Even when they attack humans, however, great whites do not usually eat them.
- _____ e. It bit in half and totally devoured¹ a young female swimmer.
- _____ f. Great whites do not usually attack humans, but when they do, they always cause serious injury and even death.

Paragraph 3

- _____ a. Another important change was that people had the freedom to live and work wherever they wanted.
- _____ b. The earliest significant change was for farming families, who were no longer isolated.
- _____ c. The final major change brought by the automobile was the building of superhighways, suburbs, huge shopping centers, and many theme parks such as Disney World in Florida.
- _____ d. The automobile revolutionized the American way of life.
- _____ e. The automobile enabled them to drive to towns and cities comfortably and conveniently.
- _____ f. In fact, people could work in a busy metropolitan city and drive home to the quiet suburbs.

¹ devoured: ate

Paragraph 4

- _____ a. In time, this melted part rises as a magma.²
- _____ b. The formation of a volcanic eruption is a dramatic series of events.
- _____ c. As the plate³ sinks, friction and the earth's heat cause part of it to melt.
- _____ d. The magma produces heat, steam, and pressure.
- _____ e. First of all, most volcanoes are formed where two plates collide.⁴
- _____ f. Then one of the plates is forced under the other and sinks.
- _____ g. When the heat, steam, and pressure from the magma finally reach the surface of the Earth, a volcanic eruption occurs.

The Two Parts of a Topic Sentence

A topic sentence has two essential parts: the topic and the controlling idea. The *topic* names the subject, or main idea, of the paragraph. The *controlling idea* makes a specific comment about the topic, which indicates what the rest of the paragraph will say about the topic. It limits or controls the topic to a specific aspect of the topic to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph.

TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA

(Convenience foods) are easy to prepare.

In this example, the topic is named: convenience foods. A specific comment is then made about the topic: They are easy to prepare. From this sentence, the reader immediately knows that the supporting sentences in the remainder of the paragraph will explain or prove how quick and easy it is to prepare convenience foods and perhaps give some examples (frozen dinners, canned soups, etc.).

CONTROLLING IDEA TOPIC

The native foods of America's immigrant population are reflected in (American cooking).

In this example, the topic is American food. The controlling idea of this topic sentence is that Americans eat many foods from other countries. Therefore, the reader should expect the paragraph to give examples of popular ethnic foods such as fried rice (Chinese), tacos (Mexican), sauerbraten (German), sukiyaki (Japanese), spaghetti (Italian), and so on.

TOPIC CONTROLLING IDEA

(The average American teenager) consumes enormous quantities of junk food.

In this example, the topic is the average American teenager. The controlling idea about the topic states that the American teenager eats junk food. Thus, the rest of the paragraph should discuss the quantities and types of junk food that American teenagers eat (soft drinks, potato chips, candy bars, etc.).

² magma: melted rock inside the earth

³ plate: rigid section of rock

⁴ collide: clash

PRACTICE 2*Identifying the Parts of
a Topic Sentence*

Circle the topic and underline the controlling idea in each of the following sentences.

Example

(Driving on freeways) requires skill and alertness.

1. Driving on freeways requires nerves of steel.¹
2. Driving on freeways requires an aggressive attitude.
3. The Caribbean island of Trinidad attracts tourists because of its calypso music.
4. Spectacular beaches make Puerto Rico a tourist paradise.
5. Living in an American college dormitory can be a stressful experience for newly arrived international students.
6. Many religious rules developed from the health needs of ancient times.
7. The spread of AIDS can be slowed by educating the public.
8. A major problem for international students is taking essay examinations.
9. Participating in class discussions in English is a problem for international students.
10. In my opinion, many television commercials for cosmetics lie to women.
11. Owning an automobile is a necessity for me.
12. It is an expensive luxury to own an automobile in a large city.

**Writing Topic
Sentences**

When you write a sentence, remember these two points:

1. A topic sentence should be neither too general nor too specific. If it is too general, the reader cannot tell exactly what the paragraph is going to discuss. If it is too specific, the writer may not have anything left to write about in the rest of the paragraph.

Think of a topic sentence as being like the name of a particular course on a restaurant menu. When you order food in a restaurant, you want to know more about a particular course than just "meat" or "soup" or "salad." You want to know *generally* what kind of salad it is. Potato salad? Mixed green salad? Fruit salad? However, you do not necessarily want to know all of its ingredients.

Similarly, the reader of a paragraph wants to know *generally* what to expect in a paragraph, but he/she does not want to learn all of the specific details in the first sentence.

Too general: American food is terrible.

Too specific: American food is tasteless and greasy because Americans use too many canned, frozen, and prepackaged foods and because everything is fried in oil or butter.

Good: American food is tasteless and greasy.

2. Do not include too many unrelated ideas in your topic sentence; if you do, your paragraph will not be unified.

Too many ideas: San Francisco is famous for its temperate climate, its many tourist attractions, and its cosmopolitan² atmosphere.

The three parts of this controlling idea are too unrelated for a single paragraph. They would require three separate paragraphs.

Good: San Francisco is famous for its cosmopolitan atmosphere.

¹ nerves of steel: very strong nerves (idiom)

² cosmopolitan: international

PRACTICE 3*Writing Topic Sentences*

- A. Write good topic sentences for the following paragraphs in the spaces provided. Remember to include both a topic and a controlling idea.

Paragraph 1

Americans relaxing at home, for example, may put on **kimonos**,³ which is a Japanese word. Americans who live in a warm climate may take an afternoon **siesta**⁴ on an outdoor **patio**⁵ without even realizing that these are Spanish words. In their gardens, they may enjoy the fragrance of **jasmine** flowers, a word that came into English from Persian. They may even relax on a **chaise longue**⁶ while sipping a drink made with **vodka**, words of French and Russian origin, respectively.

Paragraph 2

In European universities, students are not required to attend classes. In fact, professors in Germany generally do not know the names of the students enrolled in their courses. In the United States, however, students are required to attend all classes and may be penalized⁷ if they don't. Furthermore, in the European system, there is usually just one comprehensive examination at the end of the students' entire four or five years of study. In the American system, on the other hand, there are usually numerous quizzes, tests, and homework assignments, and there is almost always a final examination in each course at the end of the semester.

Paragraph 3

For example, the Eskimos, living in a treeless region of snow and ice, sometimes build temporary homes out of thick blocks of ice. People who live in deserts, on the other hand, use the most available material, mud or clay, which provides good insulation⁸ from the heat. In Northern Europe, Russia, and other areas of the world where forests are plentiful, people usually construct their homes out of wood. In the islands of the South Pacific, where there is a plentiful supply of bamboo and palm, people use these tough, fibrous⁹ plants to build their homes.

³ **kimono**: lounging robe

⁴ **siesta**: afternoon nap

⁵ **patio**: courtyard

⁶ **chaise longue**: lounge chair

⁷ **penalized**: punished

⁸ **insulation**: protection

⁹ **fibrous**: containing fiber

- B. Write two or three topic sentences for each of the following topics. In other words, give two or three controlling ideas for the same topic.

Example

Topic: Television's effects on children

Topic sentences: (1) Television is harmful to children because it teaches them violence as a way of solving problems.
(2) Television retards¹ a child's reading ability.

Smoking cigarettes
Foreign travel
Prejudice

Pollution
Touring your hometown

- C. With your classmates, choose three topics that interest you as a group. Write a topic sentence for each topic. Be sure to include a controlling idea.

The Concluding Sentence

Now that you know how to write a good topic sentence for a paragraph, you should also learn how to write a good concluding sentence. A concluding sentence is not absolutely necessary; in fact, a concluding sentence is not customary for every paragraph in a multiparagraph essay. However, for single paragraphs, especially long ones, a concluding sentence is helpful to the reader because it signals the end of the paragraph and because it is a reminder of the important points.

A concluding sentence serves three purposes:

1. It signals the end of the paragraph.
2. It summarizes the main points of the paragraph.
3. It gives a final comment on the topic and leaves the reader with the most important ideas to think about.

Use one of the following end-of-paragraph signals to introduce your concluding sentence:

END-OF-PARAGRAPH SIGNALS

| THESE ARE FOLLOWED BY A COMMA | THESE ARE NOT FOLLOWED BY A COMMA |
|--|---|
| Finally, In conclusion, In summary, Therefore, Thus, | As a result, Indeed, In brief, In short, |
| | We can see that ... It is clear that ... These examples show that ... There can be no doubt that ... The evidence suggests that ... |

¹retards: slows down

The examples that follow demonstrate two different types of concluding sentences. The first one paraphrases the topic sentence; that is, the concluding sentence repeats the main idea of the topic sentence in different words. The second example summarizes the two main points of the paragraph, which were not specifically stated in the topic sentence.

MODEL*Concluding Sentences***Synonyms**

Synonyms, words that have the same basic meaning, do not always have the same emotional meaning. For example, the words *stingy* and *frugal* both mean "careful with money." However, to call a person *stingy* is an insult, while the word *frugal* has a much more positive connotation. Similarly, a person
5 wants to be slender but not skinny, and aggressive but not pushy. Therefore, you should be careful in choosing words because many so-called synonyms are not really synonymous at all.

Gold

Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics. First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion. Therefore, it is suitable for jewelry, coins, and ornamental purposes. Gold never needs to be polished and will remain beautiful forever. For example, a Macedonian coin
5 remains as untarnished today as the day it was minted twenty-three centuries ago. Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry and science. For many years, it has been used in hundreds of industrial applications. The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits. Astronauts wear gold-plated heat shields for protection outside spaceships. In conclusion, gold is
10 treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility.

PRACTICE 4*Writing Concluding Sentences*

- STEP 1** Underline the topic sentence in each paragraph.
STEP 2 Determine the main idea of each paragraph.
STEP 3 Add a good concluding sentence to each. You may either paraphrase the topic sentence or summarize the main points.
STEP 4 Begin each concluding sentence with an end-of-paragraph signal.

Paragraph 1

You can be a good conversationalist by being a good listener. When you are conversing with someone, pay close attention to the speaker's words while looking at his or her face. Show your interest by smiling and/or nodding. Furthermore, don't interrupt while someone is speaking; it is impolite to
5 do so. If you have a good story, wait until the speaker is finished. Also, watch your body language; it can affect your communication whether you are the speaker or the listener. For instance, don't sit slumped in a chair or make nervous hand and foot movements. Be relaxed and bend your body slightly forward to show interest in the person and the conversation.

As a result, you will be good listener and conversationalist.

Paragraph 2

Modern communication technology is driving workers in the corporate world crazy. They feel buried under the large number of messages they receive daily. In addition to telephone calls, office workers receive dozens of E-mail and voice mail messages daily. In one company, in fact, managers receive an average of 100 messages a day. Because they don't have enough time to respond to these messages during office hours, it is common for them to do so in the evenings or on weekends at home.

As a result,

Review

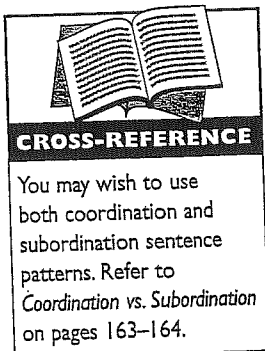
These are the important points you should have learned from this chapter:

1. A good topic sentence
 - Is a complete sentence with a subject, a verb, and a controlling idea
 - Is neither too general nor too specific. It states clearly what the main idea of the paragraph is but does not include specific details
 - Is usually the first sentence in the paragraph
2. A good concluding sentence
 - Signals the end of the paragraph
 - Summarizes the important points briefly or restates the topic sentence in different words

WRITING PRACTICE

Choose one of the topics from Practice 3B (page 26) and write a paragraph ten to fifteen sentences in length. Remember the steps in the writing process:

- STEP 1** *Prewriting* Brainstorm for Parallelism: You have already completed this step.
- STEP 2** *Planning* Develop an outline that includes a topic sentence and a concluding sentence (if necessary). Underline them.
- STEP 3** *Writing* Write a rough draft.
- STEP 4** *Editing* Ask a classmate to check your rough draft against the Peer Editing Checklist that follows.
- STEP 5** *Rewriting* Write a second draft, and proofread it for grammar and mechanics.
- STEP 6** Write a final copy to hand in.



Peer Editing

Peer editing is an interactive process of reading and commenting on a classmate's writing. You will exchange rough drafts with a classmate, read each other's paragraphs, and make helpful comments to improve your classmate's content and organization and, therefore, his or her clarity. A peer editor may say that your paragraph is "OK" or "good" but may still offer specific suggestions to improve it. If something is not clear, or if something needs to be explained more completely, he or she will tell you. You should consider his or her suggestions even though you may decide not to use all of them.

This is how to proceed: Exchange copies of your paragraph and textbooks with a classmate. Write your comments and suggestions about his or her paragraph in his or her book. Your classmate will write comments and suggestions about your paragraph in your book.

PEER EDITING CHECKLIST

| | PEER EDITOR'S COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS |
|---|--|
| GENERAL | |
| 1. What do you like best about this paragraph? | |
| PAPER FORMAT | |
| 2. Is the format (title, indenting, double spacing, margins) correct? Does it look like the model on page 19? | |
| ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT | |
| 3. Topic sentence: Is there a clear topic sentence? Does it have a controlling idea? | |
| 4. Supporting sentences: Is the main idea clear? Does the writer need to add more details to explain it? | |
| 5. Concluding sentence: Is there a concluding sentence? Does it begin with an appropriate end-of-paragraph signal? | |
| SENTENCE STRUCTURE | |
| 6. Are there any unclear sentences? Can you suggest a way to improve them? | |
| GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS | |
| 7. Are there any errors in grammar and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization)? | |