

## The Topic Sentence

A body paragraph is a part of the essay in which all the sentences are related to one specific claim or point about a specific argument (thesis). If a thesis statement guides the essay, the TOPIC SENTENCE guides the body paragraph. The first sentence of the body paragraph, the TOPIC SENTENCE (TS), let's the reader know exactly what the specific point or claim is about that topic. Each body paragraph, therefore, should have its own TS and should focus on only one specific point or claim of the thesis. The TS is specific and clear; **it is never a quote, a fact, too vague or too general.** Think of the TS as a mini thesis of the body paragraph.

Look at the sample TS's below and decide whether or not each one is a strong example of a TS. If it is not, explain why. (**Note:** These are over-simplified examples created for practice.)

\*Think of each TS below as a piece of an essay ( a part of the main argument - thesis); the first sentence of a body paragraph.

Topic Sentence	Strong	Weak	Reason (why it's not a strong TS)
1. This paragraph will be about changing the American education system.			
2. El Segundo High School desperately lacks in its offerings of foreign language.			
3. Mickey Mouse was created by Walt Disney.			
4. The Common Core is a terrible idea.			
5. The most stressful part of college life is living alone.			
6. Going abroad is the best way to study English.			
7. Odysseus and Achilles both suffered from personal loss.			
8. When Odysseus responds to the Cyclops and says his name is "Nobody", he unveils his immaturity and hubris.			
9. Television, video games and cell phones have a negative affect on children.			
10. The power of words, hidden on Himmel Street, pushes its residents toward hope.			

Here are a few steps that may help you develop TS:

**Step 1:** Your general topic.

Ex: University Life

**Step 2:** Narrow down this idea into smaller categories:

Ex: college life, classes, clubs, friends, teachers

**Step 3:** Choose one of the above smaller categories and narrow it down again.

Ex: classes: many students, academically challenging, interesting

**Step 4:** Choose one of the subcategories above and begin to form an opinion or point about it.

Ex: academically challenging: procrastination

**Step 5:** Create a TS with a specific point/claim.

Ex: The academic challenge of courses demands students' constant attention, leaving no room for procrastination.