

## THE TOPIC SENTENCE

*The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph. It contains the main idea which is developed in the rest of the paragraph. A topic sentence must be a complete sentence that focuses what the rest of the paragraph will discuss.*

*The topic sentence has two parts:*

### **topic + controlling idea**

*The topic is what the paragraph is about. The controlling idea makes a specific comment about the topic. It shows the reader what the rest of the paragraph will say about the topic. It limits the topic to a specific aspect of the topic.*

### **Topic    Controlling Idea**

Caffeine has several harmful effects on health.

*In this example the topic is “caffeine”. A specific comment is then made about the topic: “it has several harmful effects on health”. From this topic sentence, the reader immediately knows that the supporting sentences will explain or prove how harmful caffeine can be.*

The controlling idea can be in different places within the topic sentence.

### Topic, Controlling Idea

Start: There are two main advantages of working at home.

Middle: Working at home is advantageous because of its flexible hours and its comfort.

Start and End: The two main advantages of working at home are its flexible hours and its comfort.

**Exercise 1:** Underline the topic and the controlling idea of each topic sentence below.

1. When people divorce, children often have problems.
2. Walking is good for your heart.
3. Watching TV is a good way to learn spoken English.
4. Technology spoils the traditional way of life.
5. Nuclear power is our greatest hope for solving the energy crisis.
6. Nuclear power is the greatest threat to life on the planet.

**Exercise 2:** Write TWO topic sentences for each of the following thesis statements.

1. Animated films can be just as effective as live action films when it comes to communicating emotion since they are not limited by reality and lend themselves well to artistic expression.
2. Children's emotions can be just as intense as adult emotions, and children will greatly benefit from learning healthy coping ways such as meditation, art, and sports from an early age.
3. Although cooking and cleaning are often seen as female tasks, males who have not been taught these essential skills struggle when living by themselves for the first time; therefore, parents would do well to teach both their sons and daughters these life skills.
4. The Crucible effectively presents the psychological phenomenon of Conversion Disorder by showing us how seemingly reasonable people can do what seems unreasonable and can be swept away by a desire to fit in—even at a great cost.