

The controlling ideas of topic sentences

1. The controlling idea may make different sorts of points about the topic. Here are some main sorts.

- a. **Location or place**: Example: Many Hong Kong's street names have their origins in Britain.
- b. **Qualities**: If the controlling idea consists of qualities of the subject, **adjective phrases** are frequently used.
Example: His behavior has become increasingly mysterious.
- c. **Time or Place**: This type of controlling idea usually contains **adverbial structures**.
Example: The middle Class of Hong Kong endured great hardship during the financial crisis in the 1990s.
- d. **Similarity or difference**: The controlling idea contains a **comparison or contrast**.
Example: Headmasters of our school shared several important characteristics.
- e. **Cause or effect**: The controlling idea contains **reasons** for or **results** of the topic.
Examples: Second hand cigarette smoke harms the health of non-smokers. (Effect) The fire was started by a smoker. (Cause)
- f. **Number or quantity**: The controlling idea includes the **amount** of something.
Example: An immigrant from Mainland China will have to adjust to three major changes in his environment.
- g. **Opinions**: The controlling idea usually contains **modal verbs** such as “should” or “must”.
Example: The government should provide longer English training courses for Chinese immigrants.

2. A controlling idea may contain **more than one of these categories**. For example, in the sentence, “Living conditions were particularly bad in inland China.” Here, both quality (particularly bad) and place (in inland China) form part of the controlling idea.
3. Remember that **a single paragraph deals with only one main idea**. If there are two aspects of the topic mentioned in the controlling idea, their relationship must be made clear so that the main idea is apparent.
4. For example, the following sentence, appears to contain two main ideas:

Aircraft can be made safer today and new fire resistant materials have been developed.

This sentence contains two main ideas, given equal emphasis by the co-ordinate structure of the sentence.

It is impossible to tell which topic and controlling idea the writer intends to develop.

By subordinating one of the ideas, a better topic sentence can be constructed:

Today's aircraft can be made safer through the use of newly developed fire resistant materials.

The paragraph's one topic and its controlling idea are now clear.

What is the Supporting Sentence?

1. Supporting sentences **develop the topic sentence**.
2. They **give specific information** to substantiate or support the topic sentence.
3. Supporting sentences may **consist of examples, details, reasons, causes, or arguments** which explain the topic sentence.

What is the Concluding Sentence?

1. Concluding sentence signals that **the paragraph is ending**. It lets the reader know the discussion has been completed.
2. The topic sentence may also be **repeated in different words at the end of the paragraph**, where it serves as a concluding sentence.

Types of Concluding Sentence

The paragraph below does not have a concluding sentence. Seven different ways of concluding the paragraph are suggested.

A phrase, which has recently entered the popular vocabulary, is “learning disability”. People, who in former times would have been called stupid, lazy, are now being diagnosed as learning disabled.

The causes of learning disabilities are not clear and there is no known cure. Educators are now being trained to recognize these disabilities. They estimate that one person in six may be learning disabled to some degree.

They emphasize the need for early detection of and compensatory training for learning disabilities. Such facilities as pre-school screening services, special classes, and specially trained teachers are also need as soon as possible.

Main sorts of concluding sentence:

1. **Summary**: In conclusion, there is now a greater awareness of learning disabilities and more effort to take care them.
2. **Restatement of topic sentence**: Thus, the phrase “learning disabled” is becoming a familiar one in our society.
3. **Overall Impression**: It is easy to see that learning disabilities must affect a great many families.
4. **Inference**: The government should be doing more to promote understanding among the public and to encourage research into the causes and cures of learning disabled.
5. **Quotations**: The frustration felt by many learning disabled is vividly expressed in this statement from the Socrates, a great philosopher: “Entering the world of the learning disabled is like wearing glasses made of mirrors.”
6. **Most Important Supporting Sentence**: One of the main reasons why progress has been slow and uneven in Hong Kong is the lack of government intervention.
7. **Interesting or Unusual Fact**: Among the famous historical figures believed to have been learning disabled were William Jefferson, a great scientist, who would not do mental arithmetic, and Johnny Churchill, a famous singer, who was a very poor pupil.

Main points to remember:

1. A paragraph should contain a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.
2. The topic sentence states the subject of the paragraph (topic) and makes a point about the subject (controlling idea)
3. The supporting sentence develops the topic sentence.
4. The concluding sentence states the end of a paragraph.

Day 2 course is finished.