



Topic Sentences

What is a topic sentence?

Typically, a topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph provides focus and direction for the paragraph.

Example: *Cell phone use can be hazardous to your health.* Although direct effects on the brain have yet to be proven, evidence abounds that cell phones are dangerously distracting to people driving, walking, and carrying on other daily activities. In addition, cell phones collect germs and bacteria that can cause a variety of diseases. Recent studies show cell phones at the top of the list of unsanitary objects, right after the kitchen sponge. Perhaps cell phones will soon have warning labels: Caution! Use at your own risk.

What is the difference between a thesis statement and a topic sentence?

- A thesis statement is the unifying statement of the overall paper, while the topic sentence is the unifying statement of a paragraph. The topic sentence addresses a specific point mentioned in the thesis statement.
- **Example of thesis statement:** Steelmaking (*topic*) is a complex process (*argument*) that involves purifying, smelting, cooling, and refining (*specific points*).
- **Example of topic sentence:** The purification process (*a specific point*) in steelmaking (*topic*) consists of several components. (The body of the paragraph should discuss these components.)

What does a topic sentence do?

- Addresses an aspect or element of the thesis statement
- States the main topic of the paragraph
- Tells the reader what to expect in the paragraph
- Provides focus and direction to the paragraph
- Takes a position or point of view
- In an introductory paragraph about a written or artistic work, the topic sentence should mention the title of the book/poem/short story/essay/painting and the author/poet/artist by name.

For example: In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair captures the Lithuanian culture in his description of the Packingtown area of Chicago.