

Aula 8

THE TOPIC SENTENCE.

META

Deepen the studies about the paragraph with the focus on Topic Sentence.

OBJETIVOS

At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:
Improve their knowledge about writing good paragraphs;
Raise awareness about the importance of the role of Topic Sentences;
Make correct use of Topic Sentences in a paragraph.

PRERREQUISITOS

Knowledge acquired from previous classes about sentence and paragraph structure.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to class 08! We will continue to talk about the Paragraph. Now the focus is on writing the Topic Sentence. You will read different texts, think about their messages, analyze examples of topic sentences, and answer some activities. Are you ready? The idea is to help you think about the way you and other people write. By doing so, it is expected that you improve your writing. Let's start by analyzing the image below:



<http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/> Photo by winnond. Published on 03 March 2013
Stock photo - Image ID: 100143063. Last access on May 22nd, 2016.)

Let's say you are supposed to write a text based on the picture above. First of all, it is important to remember that an image itself is a text, a visual text. What does it mean? That it is filled with meaning and we have to be aware of the importance of 'reading' the intentions and messages behind every image.

To help you 'read' the image I've chosen to introduce the topic of this class, answer the following questions:

What was the first thing that called your attention about the image?

What was going on when the photo was taken?

In your opinion, what were the intentions of the photographer?

Is it a common scene that can be found in the city/district/community where you live?

Well, now that you have some ideas coming from the analysis of the image, think of two possible titles for it. Write your examples here and share them with your classmates and teachers:

Here are some possible titles:

Pollution and nature: a death sentence.

Birds and garbage, a said reality.

Is it the heritage you want to leave to your children?

Were your ideas similar to the ones above? One thing is true for sure: you haven't thought of good things when you saw the image, have you? Well, now that you have some ideas about the image, let's move to the next step: writing the Topic Sentence. Do you remember what a Topic Sentence is? Let's read the definition below that can be found on: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/29/>. Last access on May 22nd, 2016.

Every paragraph should include a topic sentence that identifies the main idea of the paragraph. A topic sentence also states the point the writer wishes to make about that subject. Generally, the topic sentence appears at the beginning of the paragraph. It is often the paragraph's very first sentence. A paragraph's topic sentence must be general enough to express the paragraph's overall subject. But it should be specific enough that the reader can understand the paragraph's main subject and point.

With that in mind, take a look at the following example of a Topic sentence that can work as the introduction of a paragraph based on the picture we've been analyzing.

It is sad to realize that despite all the discussion about the importance of preserving nature, some people still throw garbage on the beach with no worries about the negative and devastating consequences of it.

From that statement, different arguments have to follow it in order to build a complete paragraph. As you've studied in class #07, a good paragraph is composed of 03 parts: introduction, development, and conclusion. In this case, the Topic Sentence is the introduction. Why don't you continue writing the paragraph and share it with your teachers and classmates?

Before you start writing the development and conclusion for the paragraph, remember that it is a good idea to prepare a list of arguments to support the idea that was presented in the introduction, as the Topic Sentence:

It is sad to realize that despite all the discussion about the importance of nature preservation, some people still throw garbage on the beach with no worries about the negative and devastating consequences of it.

Here are some important guidelines provided by *Purdue OWL Engagement* to help you choose topic sentences for your paragraphs (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/29/>). Last access on May 22nd, 2016):

The topic sentence should identify the main idea and point of the paragraph. To choose an appropriate topic sentence, read the paragraph and think about its main idea and point.

The supporting details in the paragraph (the sentences other than the topic sentence) will develop or explain the topic sentence. Read all the supporting details in the paragraph and think about the ideas they discuss.

The topic sentence should not be too general or too specific. When considering the options, look for a topic sentence that is general enough to show the paragraph's main idea instead of just one of its details. The

answer should be specific enough that the reader understands the main idea of the paragraph.

Those are good points, right? Maybe you think it is a little complicated at first, but the point is: the more you think about the way you write, the better your texts become.



Now, read an example of a paragraph that was taken from the same site by Purdue University. Can you identify the topic sentence? To do so, considering the guidelines presented above, ask yourself: what's the main idea developed here? Then you will get to the topic sentence.

Thinking about the 1990s brings back a lot of memories for me about fashion and popular culture. During the 1990s, I really enjoyed watching Friends on television every Thursday night. I really wanted Rachel's haircut—I think every girl wanted Rachel's haircut back then! Rachel's haircut went really well with the Guess Jeans that were so popular in the 1990s. I remember all the advertisements for Guess and Calvin Klein Jeans that were in each month's Sassy magazine. I don't think Sassy magazine exists anymore, but it was one of the most popular magazines for young women in the 1990s.

COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITIES

As you could realize, the paragraph talks about someone's memories about fashion and popular culture in the 1990s. In order to support the introductory statement, which by the way is the topic sentence, the author mentioned the famous U.S. sitcom FRIENDS to focus on the fashion trends of the 1990s. The paragraph also mentions the names of brands of clothes: Guess and Calvin Klein, and the name of a famous magazine that was popular among young women. All the information was presented in a very well organized sequence.



<http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/> Photo by adamr. Published on 23 August 2012
Stock photo - Image ID: 10098729 Last access on May 22nd, 2016.

Here is another explanation about the subject of our class, from the website K12 Reader (Online source: <http://www.k12reader.com/subject/composition/topic-sentences/>. Last access on May 22nd, 2016): “Topic sentences are a vital part of paragraph writing. They state the central focus of the paragraph and provide cohesion for the paragraph. It’s important for students to learn to write clear and concise topic sentences”.

With the objective of providing you with more practice, answer the activity below that was adapted from the K12 Reader website. Before you do so, remember: the topic sentence not always comes in the beginning of a paragraph. It can appear in the middle of at the end as in the example below:

Sometimes it is hard to fall asleep. Maybe you are not sleepy, or maybe you are thinking about what happened during the day. You can also lie awake if a big event, like a test or a party, is happening the next day. There are several things you can do to try and fall asleep. You can try counting sheep, or just counting, which will keep your mind busy with a repetitious activity. Sometimes listening to soft music or gentle sounds, like rain, helps. You can even try telling yourself a story, which may distract your mind enough that you will be asleep in no time.



ACTIVITY

Read the paragraphs below and identify the topic sentence in each one of them. Underline the topic sentences and share your answers with your teachers and classmates.

a) The best trip my family ever took was to New Orleans, Louisiana. We drove there in two days. I didn't think it would be very interesting, but I was wrong. We saw the Mississippi River, rode a horse carriage in the French Quarter, and visited a cemetery where everyone was buried above the ground. I liked the food best, especially the New Orleans doughnuts called beignets.

b) No one likes to eat with a dirty knife, fork, or spoon. It is important to completely wash all utensils before using them. Clean utensils won't transmit germs and bacteria. They also are more pleasant to eat with.

c) Many people think poetry is old-fashioned and uninteresting. They don't realize that every time they hear a song sung, they are hearing poetry in the form of song lyrics. Just like many written poems, many song lyrics use rhythm, rhyme, and literary imagery. It turns out that poetry isn't old-fashioned; it's as modern as the latest hit song!

d) Growing a garden can be fun, good exercise, and will provide fresh fruits and vegetables for the gardener. It is interesting to watch the seeds pop their heads above the soil for the first time. It is sometimes hard to believe that a little seed can become a large vine or plant in just a few weeks. Planting the seeds and pulling weeds are good exercise for anyone. Then, after watching the plant grow and produce, the gardener ends up with delicious tomatoes, beans, or other yummy produce from the garden.

COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITIES

Discuss your answers with your teachers and classmates. The main point is to understand what the main idea in each of the paragraphs is. Try to identify the main idea and the ideas that were used to give support to what is being presented to the reader.



SUMMARY

In this class, we've continued to work with writing paragraphs. The focus was on the Topic Sentence. By doing so, we've reviewed points from the previous class about Paragraph Structure. We've been pointing out that writing is a process that requires preparation, and that comes from reading about the topics we are writing about. Besides that, we improve our writing through a lot of practice. Remember: everybody can write good texts!



SELF-EVALUATION

Did I increase my knowledge related to writing in English?
 Am I able to identify the Topic Sentence of a paragraph?
 Can I build clear and concise topic sentences?
 Has my knowledge of the English language improved considering the studies and practices of previous semesters?



NEXT CLASS

Next class, the focus of your studies will be on *types of paragraphs*. See you then!

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