



Topic Sentences

Enticing your reader

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- It tells the **MAIN IDEA** of the paragraph.
- It also tells what the author wants to **SAY ABOUT** the topic.

Definition

- A topic sentence tells the **main idea** of the paragraph as well as **what the author wants to say** about the topic.

What it's NOT

- A topic sentence is not a simple fact.
 - Thomas Edison invented the light bulb.
 - This is a detail.
 - This could be used in the body of the paragraph.

What it's NOT

- A topic sentence is not a simple fact.
 - Thomas Edison invented the light bulb.
 - This is a detail.
 - This could be used in the body of the paragraph.
- A topic sentence is not a question.
 - Who invented the light bulb we use today?
 - This could be used as an “attention grabber.”

Parts of a Topic Sentence

- A topic sentence tells what the main idea of the paragraph will be.
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- A topic sentence tells what the main idea of the paragraph will be.
 - We will call this the “**subject**” of the paragraph.
- A topic sentence tells what the author is going to say about the subject.
 - We will call this the “**controlling idea**” of the paragraph.

Putting the parts together

- SUBJECT + CONTROLLING IDEA

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- The invention of the light bulb
 - (subject)
- changed the world in many ways
 - (controlling idea)

Putting the parts together

- **SUBJECT** + **CONTROLLING IDEA**
- **The invention of the light bulb**
 - (subject)
- **changed the world in many ways**
 - (controlling idea)
- **The invention of the light bulb** **changed the world in many ways.**
 - or, you can reverse the two -
- **The world was changed in many ways** **by the invention of the light bulb.**

Examples of Subject

- **Subjects** can be fairly broad. The **controlling idea** will limit the subject.

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- **Subjects** can be fairly broad. The **controlling idea** will limit the subject.
- Examples of subject could be:
 - Daisies
 - Space Travel
 - Easter
 - Tooth Decay
 - Pride

Examples of Controlling Idea

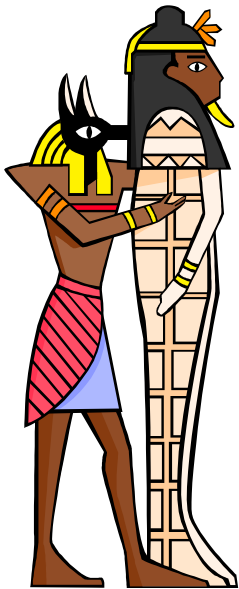
- The “controlling idea” limits the subject. It tells what the author intends to say about the subject.

Examples of Controlling Idea

- The “controlling idea” limits the subject. It tells what the author intends to say about the subject.
- Examples of controlling ideas are:
 - can be grown easily by following these steps (daisies)
 - increased during the Cold War (space travel)
 - is my favorite holiday for several reasons (Easter)
 - is caused by three things (tooth decay)
 - takes many forms (pride)

More about subjects...

The subject of a paragraph could be almost anything.



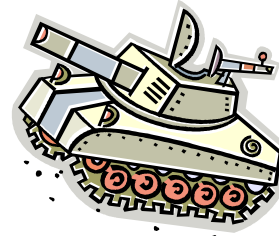
mummies



insects



ice cream



weapons



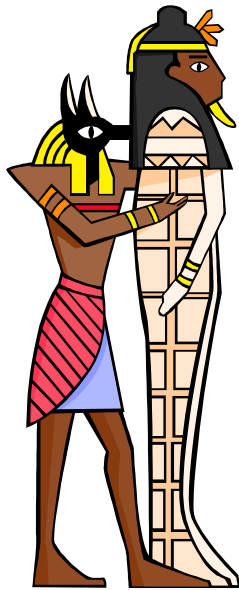
wealth



chores

More about subjects...

It is better to narrow your subject.



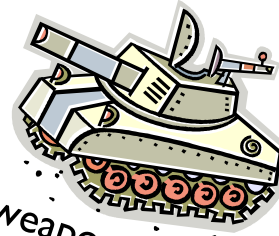
Ancient
Egyptian
death rituals



winged insects found in
Austin, Texas



making ice cream



weapons used
during the Gulf War



the quest for gold



washing dishes by hand

More about controlling ideas

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- A controlling idea limits the subject
- It can express an opinion
- It can provide focus by answering a question
- It may suggest a list.

Example 1: controlling idea

- “A **beagle** is different from other hounds because of **three unique characteristics.**”

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- The subject is “**beagles.**”
- The controlling idea is “**characteristics**”

Example 1: controlling idea

- “A **beagle** is different from other hounds because of **three unique characteristics.**”
- The subject is “**beagles.**”
- The controlling idea is “**characteristics**”
- The paragraph will talk about beagles, and it will list its three unique characteristics. The **subject** is controlled by its **characteristics.**

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Example 2b

- “Beagles make good pets for several reasons.”

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- “Beagles make good pets for several reasons.”
- The subject is “beagles make good pets.”
- The controlling idea is “reasons”
- The paragraph will talk about beagles making good pets, and it will list several reasons. The **subject** is controlled by the **reasons**.

Example 3

- “Ancient Egyptians followed seven steps to mummify their kings.”

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- The subject is “Ancient Egyptians mummified their kings.”
- The controlling idea is “seven steps.”

Example 3

- “Ancient Egyptians followed seven steps to mummify their kings.”
- The subject is “Ancient Egyptians mummified their kings.”
- The controlling idea is “seven steps.”
- The paragraph will talk about Egyptian mummies, and will list seven steps to creating one. The **subject** is being controlled by the **steps**.

Example 4

- “If you want to **create** high quality **ice cream**, you must be aware of several **precautions**.”

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- The subject is “**making ice cream.**”
- The controlling idea is “**precautions.**”

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- “If you want to **create** high quality **ice cream**, you must be aware of several **precautions**.”
- The subject is “**making ice cream**.”
- The controlling idea is “**precautions**.”
- The paragraph will talk about taking precautions when making ice cream. The **subject** is controlled by **precautions**.

Example 5

- “There are **benefits** to **making** your own **ice cream.**”

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- The subject is “**making ice cream.**”
- The controlling idea is “**benefits.**”

Example 5

- “There are **benefits** to **making** your own **ice cream**.”
- The subject is “**making ice cream**.”
- The controlling idea is “**benefits**.”
- This time, the paragraph will talk about the benefits of making your own ice cream. The **subject** is controlled by **benefits**.

Example 6

- “There are two ways to make ice cream at home.”

Example 6

- “There are **two ways** to **make ice cream** at home.”
- The subject is “**making ice cream.**”
- The controlling idea is “**ways to do it.**”

Example 6

- “There are **two ways** to **make ice cream** at home.”
- The subject is “**making ice cream.**”
- The controlling idea is “**ways to do it.**”
- This time, the paragraph will talk about the ways of making your own ice cream. The **subject** is controlled by **ways (methods, etc.)**.

Example 7

- “Although the chemical **weapons used during the Gulf War** were effective in winning the war quickly, we are just now discovering the **effects** they have had **on our own soldiers.**”

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- “Although the chemical **weapons used during the Gulf War** were effective in winning the war quickly, we are just now discovering the **effects** they have had **on our own soldiers.**”
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- The controlling idea is “**effects on our own soldiers.**”

Example 7

- “Although the chemical **weapons used during the Gulf War** were effective in winning the war quickly, we are just now discovering the **effects** they have had **on our own soldiers.**”
- The subject is “**weapons used during the Gulf War.**”
- The controlling idea is “**effects on our own soldiers.**”
- The paragraph will talk about the effects of the weapons. The **subject** is controlled by **the effects.**

Example 8

- “Most people prefer to let their automatic dishwasher take care of the dinner dishes, but there are **advantages** to **washing dishes by hand.**”

Example 8

- “Most people prefer to let their automatic dishwasher take care of the dinner dishes, but there are **advantages** to **washing dishes by hand.**”
- The subject is “**washing dishes by hand.**”
- The controlling idea is “**advantages.**”

Example 8

- “Most people prefer to let their automatic dishwasher take care of the dinner dishes, but there are **advantages** to **washing dishes by hand.**”
- The subject is “**washing dishes by hand.**”
- The controlling idea is “**advantages.**”
- The paragraph will talk about the advantages of washing dishes by hand. The **subject** is controlled by **the advantages.**

Example 9

- “Thousands of people made their way to the Yukon on their quest for gold, but the obstacles to wealth were many.”

Example 9

- “Thousands of people made their way to the Yukon on their quest for gold, but the obstacles to wealth were many.”
- The subject is “quest for gold in the Yukon.”
- The controlling idea is “obstacles.”

Example 9

- “Thousands of people made their way to the Yukon on their quest for gold, but the obstacles to wealth were many.”
- The subject is “quest for gold in the Yukon.”
- The controlling idea is “obstacles.”
- The paragraph will talk about the obstacles to getting rich from the Yukon’s gold. The subject is controlled by the obstacles.

Example 10

- “Winged insects found in Austin, Texas fall into four major categories.”

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- The subject is “winged insects in Austin.”
- The controlling idea is “kinds.”

Example 10

- “Winged insects found in Austin, Texas fall into four major categories.”
- The subject is “winged insects in Austin.”
- The controlling idea is “kinds.”
- This paragraph will talk about the different categories of winged insects in Austin. The subject is controlled by the categories (kinds, types, etc.).

Subject could be:

- Beagles as pets
- Ancient Egyptian mummies
- Winged insects in Austin
- The quest for gold
- Gulf War weapons
- Doing dishes by hand
- Planting a tree
- Visiting grandparents
- Tomato soup
 - *The list is endless...!*

Subject + controlling idea

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- Beagles as pets
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Controlling idea could be:

- Precautions for...
- Advantages of...
- Reasons for...
- Causes of...
- Effects of ...
- Steps for...
- Ways to...
- Methods of...
- Different parts/types/kinds...
- Qualities/characteristics of...
- Difficulties of...
- Obstacles to...

Subject + controlling idea

Focus of Paragraph

- A topic sentence will tell the SUBJECT of the paragraph and may answer one of these questions:
 - **Why?** Why is Bermuda a popular vacation spot?
 - **Which?** Which weapons were harmful to our own soldiers?
 - **Where?** Where are the best locations for hunting moose?
 - **What?** What precautions should be taken to avoid injury?
 - **How?** How did Ancient Egyptians mummify their kings?

Summary

- A topic sentence of a paragraph introduces the **SUBJECT** of the paragraph and limits what the author will say about the subject by adding a **CONTROLLING IDEA**.
- The controlling idea may answer a question, suggest a list, or express an opinion.
- **SUBJECT** + **CONTROLLING IDEA** = **Topic Sentence**