

5-Day Plan – Focus: Topic Sentences

Learning Outcome

Students construct and organize text to share perspectives and develop creative expression.

Knowledge

Writing processes: planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing

Days 1 and 2

To introduce the lesson, let the students know what we will be learning about - **topic sentences**. To induce thinking, ask them to ask the question, “Who or what am I writing about?” The answer should be a word or a phrase from the prompt. Now say, “A **topic sentence** is the **Star of the Show** because it tells the reader the **main idea** of the paragraph that will be supported with your CDs, CMs, and CS.

I DO (Students write WITH teacher)

Step 1

Write: *The **Topic** (also known as the **Subject** of a paragraph) is what the paragraph is about, which is usually a word or phrase from the writing prompt. What follows the **Topic** is **Your Answer** to the prompt. So, it’s your **Idea** (also known as the **Main Idea**), which you are trying to get across to the reader that answers the prompt about the **Topic**.*

Step 2

Write: Volleyball is a fun sport because it requires teamwork.

Ask and answer:

1. “Who or what am I writing about?” – Topic = volleyball
2. What is the main idea? – fun sport + requires teamwork

Say: This is a strong topic sentence because it tells:

- ✓ what the paragraph is about
- ✓ what I will explain

Step 3

Write: Climate change is affecting the Earth because temperatures are rising and weather patterns are changing.

Ask and answer:

1. “Who or what am I writing about?” – Topic = climate change
2. What is the main idea? - it is affecting the Earth

+ temperatures are rising + weather patterns are changing

(Faith, this is a three-pronged Topic sentence, which means the writer must support those three assertions with evidence. You could just say Climate change is affecting the Earth as your Topic Sentence. Then, your CDs would be 1) temperatures are rising; and 2) weather patterns are changing. It looks like you’re putting your evidence in your TS. It appears more like a thesis statement in which one body paragraph would be about temperatures and another body paragraph would be about weather patterns.

Write: Weather can change quickly because wind, temperature, and clouds are always moving.

Ask and answer:

- “Who or what am I writing about?” – Topic – weather
- What is the main idea? - it changes quickly

+ wind, temperature, clouds are always moving – This is better because “moving” is more of a CM than a CD, and in the body paragraph, the writer will discuss the evidence behind why they move. But, again, require the students to have 3+ sentences on the wind’s, temperatures’, and clouds’ movements. If the TS is the Main Idea, then everything in the TS must be unpacked in the body of the paragraph. When we “revise” our TS, we usually add information from the CM side, not the CD side. In Step 3a, you have CDs in the TS; in Step 3b, you have CMs. Step 3b is good because now the students have someplace to go, whereas Step 3a has detail, which leads to redundancy in CDs and the CMs.

Step 4

Highlight that good topic sentences:

- ✓ tell “Who or what am I writing about?” – Topic
- ✓ tell the main idea
- ✓ help the reader know what’s coming next (I wouldn’t say this, because then you’ll see redundancy). Help the reader know the Topic and the Main Idea that you will be unpacking in the body paragraph.

WE DO

Step 1

The following TSs will be projected:

1. The human body has many **systems**, and each one has a special job to keep us alive.
2. Ancient Egypt was a powerful civilization because it had strong leaders and advanced knowledge.
3. Pharaohs were important leaders because they ruled Egypt and made laws.

4. The hydrosphere is important because it provides water for all living things. **This is going to be difficult to unpack. What about, it provides life for all living things, and then the writer talks about water in the body.**

For each, the students and teacher will work together to identify the topic and main idea. The teacher will ask probing questions and underline the correct answers.

YOU DO

Task: Identify Topic and Main Idea

Students will be given the following topic sentences. For each, they will write the **topic** and **main idea**.

1. The circulatory system is important because **it moves blood** around the body. **Essential substances**
2. Ancient Egyptians built pyramids because they believed in life after death.
3. The desert climate is harsh **because it receives very little rain.** **Climate?**
4. The respiratory system helps the body because it **brings in oxygen.** **Is essential to life.**
5. The Nile River was important because it provided **water and fertile land.** **Life-giving resources**

Expected Responses (see above)

1. Topic → circulatory system
Main Idea → moves blood
2. Topic → Ancient Egyptians / pyramids
Main Idea → belief in afterlife
3. Topic → desert climate
Main Idea → gets very little rain
4. Topic → respiratory system
Main Idea → brings in oxygen

5. Topic → Nile River
Main Idea → provides water and land

Support (Amber)

- read sentences aloud
- help students locate topic (often first noun or noun phrase)
- prompt:
 - “Who or what am I writing about?”
 - “What am I saying about it?”
- scribe if needed

DAY 3 – Writing Topic Sentences from Chunks

Learning Goal

Students will write topic sentences using their own or provided 2+:1 chunks

I DO

Say: Last week, you wrote 2+:1 chunk (CD + CM). Today, we will write topic sentences for these.

Display a student-style chunk: **(You’re mixing CDs with CMs)**

CD: Players jump high to hit the ball.

CD: They work together to keep the ball in play.

CM: This shows teamwork is important. (“jumping” is not related to teamwork, so both of your CDs must be addressed in the 1 CM)

CD: Players sometimes jump to hit the ball over the net.

CD: They “volley” the ball to each other to keep the ball in play.

CM: This shows that individual ability and teamwork is important.

Ask and answer: What is this about? - teamwork / volleyball

Write a suitable TS: Volleyball is enjoyable and players must work as a team.
(what CD or CM has to do with enjoyable?)

Volleyball requires skill, and players must work as a team.

WE DO

Use another student chunk:

CD: Players on one team wear similar outfits. (Players on each team wear the same outfit.)

CD: Their outfits have numbers at the back.

CM: This makes them look good together.

CM: This helps the onlookers and referees know which player is on which team.

Ask: What is the main idea? – team outfits.

Students create TS: Volleyball team members wear similar (do not repeat the same word from another sentence) uniforms to show they belong together.

YOU DO

Students:

1. choose 1–2 chunks from last week
2. write a topic sentence for each

Expected:

- ✓ TS previews details, but does not use the same words (synonyms)
- ✓ clear main idea

Amber supports small group with further explanations, reading and scribing. They will get these two chunks to write their TSs: (Typically, two chunks should be reserved for 7th – 8th grade students; 4th and 5th grade students should be working on improving the quality of specific, relevant, and appropriate CDs and insightful CMs that show inferencing, depth, and quality of thinking.. If the writer has two chunks, then the TS must cover both chunks, which is also more cognitively challenging for elementary students.

Below is unclear to me. A two-chunk paragraph has only one TS and one CS. So, when you're talking about two chunks, they both belong in the same body paragraph.

Chunk 1

CD1: Eating fruits and vegetables helps your body stay strong.

CD2: Drinking water keeps your body hydrated.

CM: This shows that healthy habits help your body work well.

TS starter: Eating healthy is important _____

Chunk 2

CD1: Winter in Alberta is very cold.

CD2: There is a lot of snow on the ground.

CM: This shows that winter can be harsh and requires warm clothing.

TS starter: Winter in Alberta is _____

DAYs 4 and 5 – Putting It Together (TS + Chunk)

Learning Goal

Students will combine a topic sentence with **one** chunk

I DO (Students write WITH teacher)

Model by writing the 2+:1 chunk first, then the TS:

TS: Spring is an exciting season because plants begin to grow and the weather gets warmer.

CD: Flowers start to bloom in many places.

CD: The weather becomes warmer and more comfortable. (These are CMs – what is considered warm for some is not warm for others. Same with “comfortable.”)

CD: Also, in areas with seasons, temperatures rise from the freezing winter temperatures to 70 degrees.

CM: This shows that spring brings new life and (comfortable) enjoyable weather.

While I write, I think and say the process aloud.

WE DO (Students write WITH teacher)

CD: Snow begins to melt. (good)

CD: Grass starts to grow again. (good)

CM: This shows that spring is a time of change. (nice)

Build together:

- “Who or what am I writing about?” - spring
- What are the **concrete details** about? - changes in spring

Co-construct TS:

Spring is a season of change because nature begins to grow (does not relate to **melting) again.**

Spring is a season of change as nature puts on a new face.

Spring is a season where nature changes right before our eyes.

Spring is a season where what was dead now comes alive.

Say: Notice how the topic sentence matches the details and the explanation.

YOU DO

Students should choose their best chunk from last week and add a matching topic sentence. They will be supported to write one or **two TSs** for each chunk.

Support (Amber – Low Level Group)

Amber will:

- work with a small group to **revisit their chunks step-by-step**
- read their sentences aloud with them
- help students **say their ideas before writing**
- scribe student responses when needed
- break the task into smaller steps:
 1. **“Who or what am I writing about?”**
 2. What are your concrete details about? “Are they what you read, what you saw, what you or someone else did, or what you or someone else said?”
 3. Let’s turn that into a sentence

Questions to Teach the Students to Ask Themselves: - you want the students to learn how ask themselves these questions.

- “Who or what is my chunk about?”
- “How would I answer in one sentence?”
- “What do all my details have in common?” *Spring, nature, and change*

In spring, nature changes.

