

# I

## Writing topic sentences

Look at this picture.



What is the main idea of the picture? You might say that one fisherman caught a lot of fish but the other pulled up a rubber tire.

Paragraphs also have main ideas. The **main idea** of a paragraph is what the paragraph is all about. The **details** in the paragraph tell about the main idea.

- A. Write a paragraph about the picture above. You already know the main idea. Add some details to complete your paragraph.

---

---

---

---

---

Sometimes the main idea is stated in one sentence. This sentence is called the **topic sentence**. The topic sentence can be found anywhere in a paragraph, but usually it comes at the beginning or end of the paragraph. Do you have a topic sentence in your paragraph for part A? If so, underline it.

B. Read the following paragraph. Underline the topic sentence.

Either the well was very deep, or Alice fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything. Then she looked at the sides of the well and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and bookshelves. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed. It was labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty. She did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody underneath, so she managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

—Lewis Carroll

C. Read the following paragraph. Think about the details. Think about what the whole paragraph is about. Then write a topic sentence below.

Last Thursday, strange tracks were found in Clancy's farm. On Friday, Maybelle Henning claims she saw a huge, apelike creature on Route 12D, near Ludlow. Something ripped the door off Tony Alfa's chicken coop and ate nineteen chickens Sunday morning. Today, Mayor Rodriguez says he saw an apeman with a sheep under its arm near Blanket Lake.



---

On another sheet of paper, write a paragraph about the strangest thing you have ever seen. Experiment with where you place the topic sentence. Write the paragraph in three different ways. First, begin with the topic sentence. Next, end with the topic sentence. Finally, rewrite the paragraph with the topic sentence in the middle of the paragraph.

---

**The topic sentence states the main idea of a paragraph. The details tell about the main idea.**

---

# 2

## Keeping to the topic



Cynthia is going to a Halloween party. If she wants to dress as Captain Hook, she has to choose the details of her costume carefully. An eye patch and an old three-cornered hat will do. A fancy dress is out of place.

Paragraphs should be dressed properly too. Make sure all the details in your sentences fit the main idea.

- A. What would you wear if you were going to a Halloween party? Write a topic sentence about your costume. Then add details to describe each part of the costume.

---



---



---



---



---



---

- B. Read the following paragraphs. Underline the topic sentence in each. Cross out any sentences that don't tell about the topic. Then write another sentence about the main idea on the lines after each paragraph.

The food at Mrs. Roald's picnic was spectacular! Giant hams, huge steaming roast beefs, and mountains of fried chicken were piled high on one long table. Everyone played softball, and there were pony rides for the kids. I've never seen so many salads—potato, garden fruit, and about twelve others I didn't recognize. I once got sick from eating egg salad.

---

---

People's body language, or the way they move, can show how they are feeling. For example, I always drum my fingers on the nearest desk or chair when I'm bored. My friend Sophie twists a strand of her hair when she's nervous. She has nice dark hair that she wears long. I like my hair short. My dad folds his arms and clears his throat when he's getting angry.

---

---



On a separate sheet, write a topic sentence. Choose one of those listed below or think of your own. Then write a paragraph in which each detail sentence tells about the topic.

I think dogs make the best pets.

There was one day in my life that I'd like to forget.

What an exciting game we had!

---

**All the sentences in a paragraph should tell about the main idea of the paragraph.**

---



# 3

## Developing a paragraph

How would you complete this paragraph?

There are lots of things I like about life.

This idea is too big to develop in one paragraph. A good writer **narrows** the main idea to a topic that can be developed in one paragraph. For example:

There are certain things I like about living next to a restaurant.

A. List some details that could go with this topic sentence.

---



---



---



---

B. The following topic sentences are much too broad to develop in a paragraph. Rewrite them so that they are more narrow.

1. I've been thinking about things a lot lately.

---



---

2. People do very unusual things.

---



---



When writing about your ideas and feelings, often the best kinds of details are **examples**. One good example will illustrate a main idea better than many sentences of explanation. For example, instead of saying "I was very unhappy," you might say, "Every night I sobbed into my pillow until it was too soggy to sleep on."

- C. A topic sentence is given below. Write a paragraph to go with it. Remember to use sentences that give examples or other details about the topic sentence.

Joe's Uncle Englebert is a real character. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



On another sheet of paper, write an idea for a script that will be used for one story of your favorite TV series. In one sentence briefly state the main idea of the show. Then write a paragraph about your script which develops the main idea by adding examples and other details.

---

**Before you develop a paragraph, be sure your topic is narrow enough. You can develop your topic by giving examples and other details.**

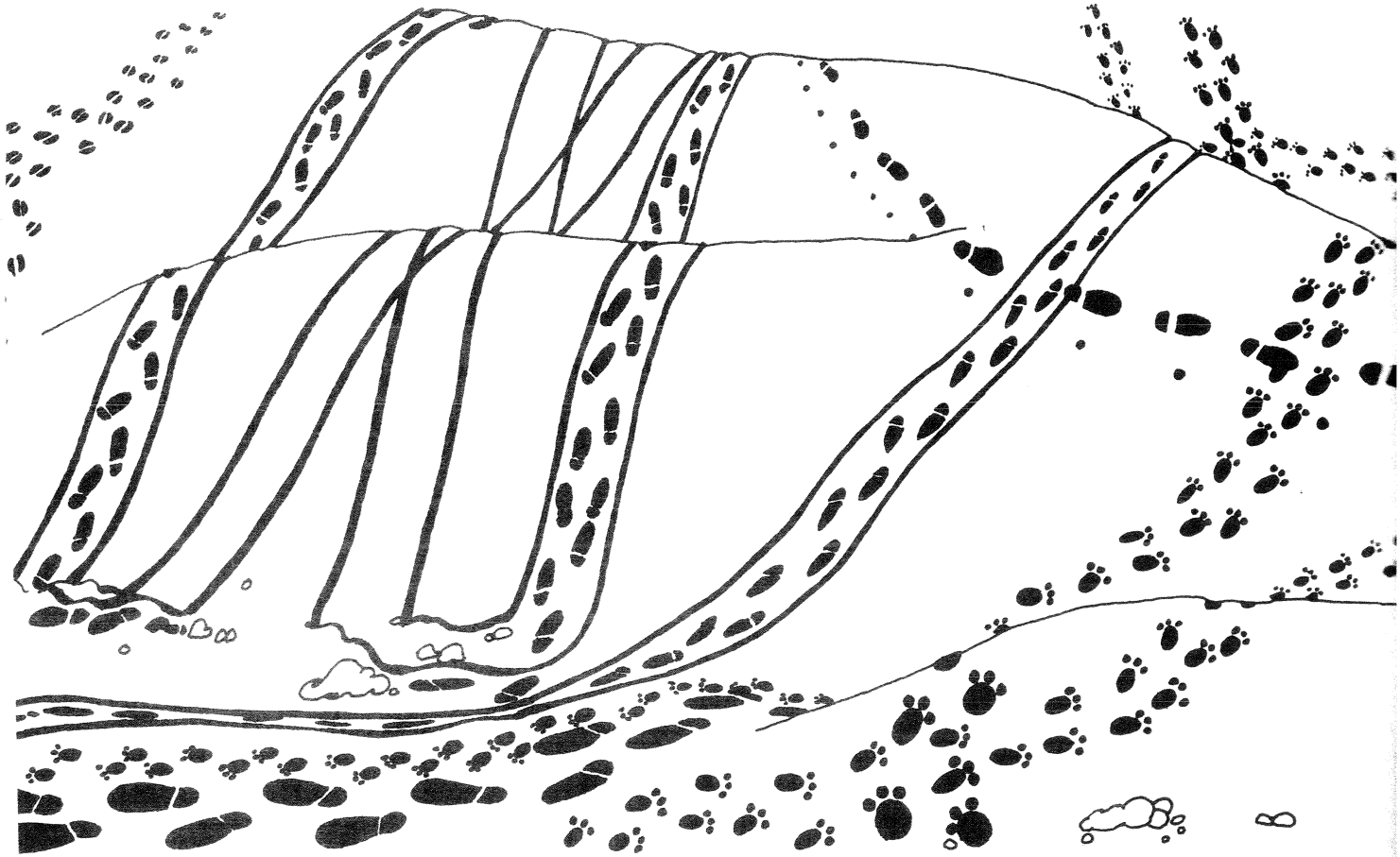
---



# 4

## Writing a science paragraph

Pretend you wake up one morning and decide to think like a scientist. There has been a snowstorm the night before, and you form the idea that many people and animals have already enjoyed the snow in the park across the street. What do you do to prove your idea? You go to the window and observe the following patterns of tracks.



A. Write a few sentences about your observations. Remember the idea that you want to prove.

---



---



---

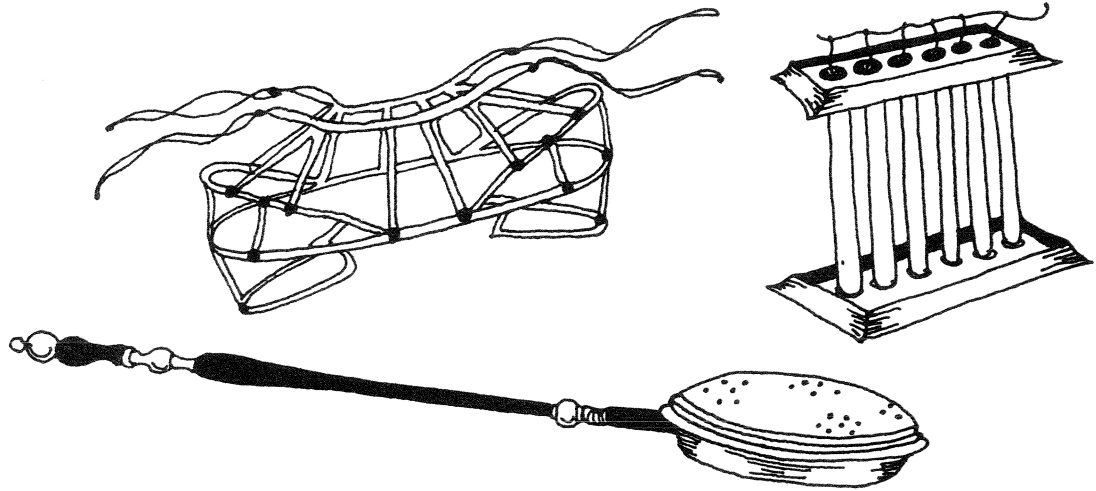
---

---

---

Scientists observe. They write down **facts** about what they observe. Then they draw **conclusions** based on their observations.

- B. Some scientists study objects from the past to learn how they were used and who used them. Below are three pictures of objects from the past. Choose one and study it carefully. Then draw some conclusions about what it was used for and who used it. On the lines below, write your conclusions and the facts you based them on.



---

---

---

---



Scientific discoveries often make new inventions possible. If you were a scientist, what would you like to invent? A machine to get you out of bed and dress you? A jet-propelled bike? A homework machine? On another sheet of paper, state the main idea of your invention: what it is and what it does. Then describe your invention in more detail. Write clear sentences. Draw a picture of your invention if you wish.

---

**Science paragraphs should contain facts and conclusions.**

---

lesson  
**5**

---

## Writing a social studies paragraph

---

How is a social studies paragraph like a newspaper article? They both usually answer *wh* questions: **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, and **why**. Often the topic sentence answers most of these questions.

A. Read the following paragraphs. Write answers to the questions on the lines below.

1. George McJunkin, a black cowboy, made a great discovery in 1925. He spotted some unusual animal bones in the dry bed of a stream near Folsom, New Mexico. He also found a graceful stone spearhead among the bones. The spear had killed the animal.

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

When: \_\_\_\_\_

Where: \_\_\_\_\_

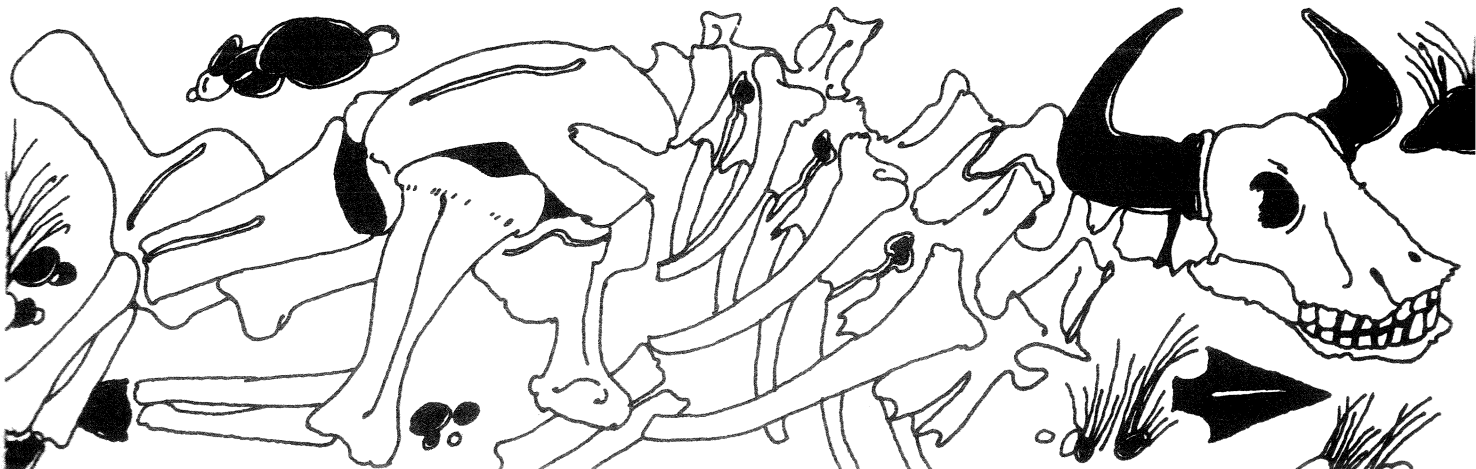
What: \_\_\_\_\_

2. News of McJunkin's find reached some scientists at a nearby university. The scientists were very surprised when they investigated the find. The bones were of a type of buffalo that had been extinct for eight thousand years. Since only humans can make spearheads, the scientists realized that people had been in America at least eight thousand years ago. This was much earlier than anyone had thought.

Who: \_\_\_\_\_

What: \_\_\_\_\_

Why: \_\_\_\_\_



- B. Use the following information to write a short paragraph about the first women's rights convention in the U.S. Be sure to include a topic sentence.

Who: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott

When: 1848

Where: Seneca Falls, New York

What: small meeting

Why: to work for women's right to vote

---

---

---

---

---



Social studies paragraphs present facts that answer *wh* questions. People who read and write social studies, however, are also interested in the explanation of facts. Choose one of the facts below to explain on another piece of paper. Tell how the fact has changed the way of life of your community, your family, or yourself.

In 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women the right to vote.

In 1903, the Wright Brothers flew an engine-driven airplane for the first time.

By 1951, television programs were broadcast from coast to coast.

---

**Social studies paragraphs answer the questions who, what, where, when, and why. Social studies paragraphs also explain facts.**

---

# Revising

lesson

## 6

### Writing more exact nouns

What's wrong with the ad below?



Well, a boat can be a beautiful new ocean liner or a dumpy old rowboat. Before you pay five hundred dollars, you'd probably want to know exactly what kind of boat you'd be traveling on. A more **exact noun**, like *rowboat*, gives more information than a general noun, like *boat*.

A. Read the following sentences. Replace each underlined general noun by writing an exact noun on the lines. You can use your own exact noun or choose one from the list below.

Saint Bernard  
fruit salad

sports car

shriek  
daisies

1. The animal saved the little girl's life by keeping her warm during the snowstorm. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The field shimmered with flowers. \_\_\_\_\_

3. That food sure tasted good. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Suddenly a sound rang out in the night. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Ted drove up in his new vehicle. \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** For every general noun below, write two more exact nouns.

1. animal \_\_\_\_\_
2. clothes \_\_\_\_\_
3. furniture \_\_\_\_\_
4. snack \_\_\_\_\_
5. feeling \_\_\_\_\_

**C.** Rewrite the following paragraph. Replace each underlined noun or noun phrase with a more exact noun or noun phrase.

These two guys went hiking one day. One guy walked into this place and saw this thing peering through the trees. They just stared at each other for some time. The other guy dropped his stuff and took off. The first guy jumped and screamed, and another person came and scared it away.

---



---



---



---



---



---



Look over all the “Write On” paragraphs you’ve written for this unit. Pay special attention to the nouns. Choose one paragraph that could use more exact nouns. Rewrite it. Make sure the nouns you choose name exactly what you have in mind.

Use exact nouns to make your writing more interesting and accurate.



# Proofreading

lesson  
**7**

## Writing complete sentences

Look at the word groups below.

1  
Kristie walked

2  
Robin ran

3  
crawled outside

4  
Robin at the store

A. Write answers to the questions below.

1. Which word groups—1, 2, 3, and/or 4—would you say are complete sentences? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which word groups are not complete sentences? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the subjects in word groups 1 and 2?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What are the verbs in word groups 1 and 2?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does word group 3 contain a subject? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Does word group 4 contain a verb? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Think about how you answered the questions for part A. What two parts must a complete sentence have?

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Read the following word groups. Write an S next to each complete sentence. Write an N next to each word group that is not a complete sentence.

1. Hazel cooks \_\_\_\_\_

2. Walter the desk \_\_\_\_\_

3. The orange, red, and yellow flame \_\_\_\_\_

4. He walked quietly down the hill \_\_\_\_\_
5. Looking carefully through \_\_\_\_\_
6. The rain fell \_\_\_\_\_
7. Going to the fair \_\_\_\_\_
8. Lois jumped, and I yelled \_\_\_\_\_
9. He and the rhinoceros \_\_\_\_\_
10. The greatest day \_\_\_\_\_

A sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark. Study these sentences.

Bruce nodded his head<sup>⊙</sup> His eyes<sup>closed</sup> slowly. ~~S~~ <sup>he</sup> soon<sup>Λ</sup> was asleep.

The sentences above have been proofread. **Proofreading** means reading over what you have written and making corrections. Notice how the corrections above were made.

**D.** Proofread and correct the sentences below.

The cook stirred the mixture then he poured it into a baking dish  
He it into the oven. When do think it will be ready.

---

**As you proofread your writing, check to see:**

- that every sentence has a subject and a verb
  - that every sentence begins with a capital letter
  - that every sentence ends with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark
-