

Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs should all work to support your thesis by explaining why or how your thesis is true. There are three types of sentences in each body paragraph: topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences.

Topic sentences

A topic sentence states the focus of the paragraph. The rest of the body paragraph will give evidence and explanations that show why or how your topic sentence is true. A topic sentence is very similar to a thesis. The thesis is the main idea of the essay; a topic sentence is the main idea of a body paragraph. Many of the same characteristics apply to topic sentences that apply to theses. The biggest differences will be the location of the sentence and the scope of the ideas.

An effective topic sentence—

- clearly **supports** the thesis statement.
- is usually at the **beginning** of a body paragraph.
- controls the content of **all** of the supporting sentences in its paragraph.
- is a **complete** sentence.
- does **not announce** the topic (e.g., “I’m going to talk about exercise.”).
- should **not** be **too general** (e.g., “Exercise is good.”).
- should **not** be **too specific** (e.g., “Exercise decreases the chance of developing diabetes, heart disease, asthma, osteoporosis, depression, and anxiety.”).

1 Exercise: Analyze a topic sentence.

Read the example body paragraph below to complete this exercise on a piece of paper.

Prompt: Why is exercise important?

Thesis: Exercise is essential because it improves overall physical and mental health.

Because it makes your body healthier, exercise is extremely important. One of the physical benefits of exercise is having stronger muscles. The only way to make your muscles stronger is to use them, and exercises like crunches, squats, lunges, push-ups, and weight-lifting are good examples of exercises that strengthen your muscles. Another benefit of exercise is that it lowers your heart rate. A slow heart rate can show that our hearts are working more efficiently and they don't have to pump as many times in a minute to get blood to our organs. Related to our heart beating more efficiently, our blood pressure decreases. These are just some of the incredible health benefits of exercise.

Find the topic sentence. Use the following criteria to evaluate the topic sentence.

1. Does the topic sentence clearly support the thesis statement?
2. Is the topic sentence at the beginning of the body paragraph?
3. Does the topic sentence control the content of all the supporting sentences?
4. Is the topic sentence a complete sentence?
5. Does the topic sentence announce the topic?
6. Is the topic sentence too general? Is it too specific?

2 Exercise: Identify topic sentences.

Each group of sentences has three supporting sentences and one topic sentence. The topic sentence must be broad enough to include all of the supporting sentences. In each group of sentences, choose which sentence is the topic sentence. Write the letter of the topic sentence on the line given.

Group 1: Topic sentence: _____

- A. In southern Utah, hikers enjoy the scenic trails in Zion National Park.
- B. Many cities in Utah have created hiking trails in city parks for people to use.
- C. There are hiking paths in Utah's Rocky Mountains that provide beautiful views.
- D. Hikers all over Utah can access hiking trails and enjoy nature.

Group 2: Topic sentence: _____

- A. People in New York speak many different languages.
- B. New York is a culturally diverse city.
- C. People in New York belong to many different religions.
- D. Restaurants in New York have food from all over the world.

Group 3: Topic sentence: _____

- A. Websites like YouTube have video tutorials that teach many different skills.
- B. Computer programs like PowerPoint are used in classrooms to teach new concepts.
- C. Technology helps people learn things in today's world.
- D. Many educational apps have been created to help children in school.

Group 4: Topic sentence: _____

- A. Museums at BYU host events on the weekends for students.
- B. There are many fun activities for students at BYU on the weekends.
- C. There are incredible student concerts at BYU on Friday and Saturday nights.
- D. BYU clubs plan exciting activities for students to do on the weekends.

Group 5: Topic sentence: _____

- A. Some places have a scent that people remember when they think of that place.
- B. The smell of someone’s cologne can trigger a memory of that person.
- C. Smelling certain foods can bring back memories of eating that food.
- D. Many different memories can be connected to specific smells.

3 Exercise: Write topic sentences

Read each paragraph. On a piece of paper, write a topic sentence on the line at the beginning of the paragraph.

1. _____ The first difference is that you have more privacy in a private room than in a shared room. You can go to your room to have a private phone call or Skype with your family and you are not bothered by other people. When you share your room, it can be hard to find private time when you can do things alone. Another difference is that it is lonelier in a private room than in a shared room. When you share your room with a roommate, you have someone that you can talk to. Frequently when you have a private room, you are alone more often. These two housing options are very different.

2. _____ People like to eat chocolate because it has many delicious

flavors. For example, there are mint chocolates, milk chocolates, dark chocolates, white chocolates, chocolates with honey, and chocolates with nuts. Another reason people like to eat chocolate is because it reduces stress, which can help people to relax and feel better. The last reason people like to eat chocolate is because it can be cooked in many different ways. You can eat chocolate candies, mix chocolate with warm milk to drink, or prepare a chocolate dessert. These reasons are some of the reasons that people like to eat chocolate.

3. _____ A respectful roommate does not leave the main areas of the apartment messy after they use them. For example, they wash their dishes instead of leaving dirty pots and pans on the stove. They also don't borrow things from other roommates without asking to use them first. In addition to respecting everyone's need for space and their possessions, the ideal roommate is respectful of his or her roommate's schedule. For example, if one roommate is asleep and the other roommate needs to study, the ideal roommate goes to the kitchen or living room instead of waking up the sleeping roommate. These simple gestures of respect make a roommate an excellent person to share an apartment with.

Supporting sentences

Your body paragraph needs to explain why or how your topic sentence is true. The sentences that support your topic sentence are called supporting sentences. You can have many types of supporting sentences. Supporting sentences can give examples, explanations, details, descriptions, facts, reasons, etc.

Topic Sentence	Exercise improves you mental health.
Supporting Sentences	Exercise is the healthiest way to deal with stress. Exercise can influence the balance of chemicals in our bodies. Exercise also helps us think more clearly.

4 Exercise: Identify good supporting sentences.

Read the topic sentence. Then circle which sentences would be good supporting sentences.

Topic Sentence: Eating pancakes for breakfast saves time and money.

- A. Pancakes can be prepared in large quantities and then frozen, so the time it takes to cook breakfast is only a few minutes.
- B. Pancakes are very inexpensive to make because you only need a few ingredients.
- C. Pancakes are delicious and can be prepared in a variety of flavors.
- D. Pancakes save money because you can buy a big box of mix and only make what you need; you don't waste money because you can save the extra mix for another time.
- E. Fresh fruit is a really quick breakfast because you only need to wash it and eat it.

Concluding sentences

Your final statement should conclude your paragraph logically. Concluding sentences can restate the main idea of your paragraph, state an opinion, make a prediction, give advice, etc. New ideas should not be presented in your concluding sentence.

Type of Concluding Sentence	Example
Restatement of topic sentence	Because it makes your body healthier, exercise is extremely important.
Opinion	These health benefits show that exercise is not a waste of time.
Prediction	When people see these health benefits, they will want to exercise more.
Advice	Everyone should exercise regularly to obtain these amazing health benefits.

5 Exercise: Identify good concluding sentences.

Read the topic sentence. Then circle which sentences would be good concluding sentences.

Topic Sentence: A shared room offers students a more social experience.

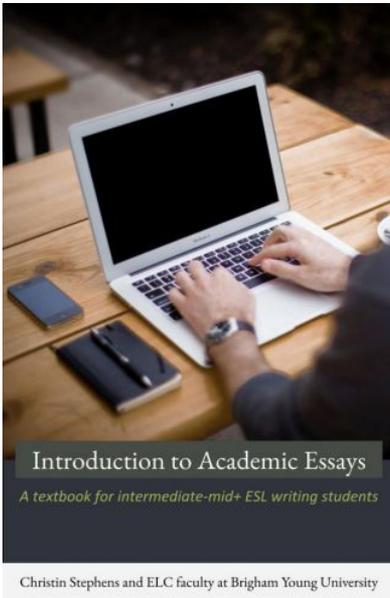
- A. Students who want more social interaction should have a shared room.
- B. A shared room is not good for students who work late.
- C. Everyone loves having a shared room.
- D. These examples illustrate how much more social a shared room can be.
- E. Really social students will enjoy having a shared room.

Exercise: Write concluding sentences.

On a piece of paper, write a concluding sentence at the end of each paragraph.

1. New York is a culturally diverse city. This culture is continually broadened because people immigrate from all over the world bringing different religions, food, and languages with them. This city has people that speak over 30 languages, including Arabic, Mandarin, Untu, Russian, and Polish. There are also more than 20 major religions represented by citizens of New York. These citizens brought more than their language and religion with them, however. They also brought traditional foods from their countries. _____

2. Technology helps people learn things in today's world. This educational technology includes various websites, apps, programs, and many more things. Popular websites that are used for education include YouTube, TED, Canvas, and CrashCourse. Similarly, there are a variety of educational apps. These apps help users learn languages, history, math, and other practical skills. Computer programs are yet another way to use technology as a way to help people learn. Programs like PowerPoint are frequently used in classrooms as a means to deliver visual support to a lecture or presentation. This visual support aids learning and retention. _____



Stephens, C. (n.d.). *Academic A Writing*. EdTech Books.
https://edtechbooks.org/academic_a_writing