

Topic Sentences

A **paragraph** is a group of related sentences. Each sentence tells something about the main idea of the paragraph. Many paragraphs have a **topic sentence**. This sentence states the writer's main idea.

► Each passage is missing its topic sentence. Choose the answer that is the best topic sentence.

_____ Some plants use the wind. Their seeds float or glide in the air. These seeds weigh very little. Other seeds float on water. The water carries them to a new location. Some types of seeds depend on animals to spread them. For example, birds

and other animals eat fruit and spread the fruit seeds. Squirrels bury nuts, and these seeds can grow into trees later. Other seeds have hooks or barbs on them. These seeds spread by sticking to an animal's fur.

1. **A** Planting your own vegetable seeds is not difficult.
B Plants have many ways of spreading their seeds.
C Today people are learning how to take advantage of the wind.
D Plants grow in many types of soil and climate.

Bamboo is a type of grass. This plant is easy to grow. It can get very tall very quickly. This makes it a popular material.

_____ It is a common building material in China. The Chinese also use it in books, hats, and tools. People in the

United States use bamboo for floors. It is very strong. Bamboo can also be made into soft fabric. Shirts, pants, and even shoes are made from it. There are also bamboo sheets and blankets.

2. **A** Wood from coconut palm trees is also very popular.
B People use wood and other products from trees every day.
C Bamboo is the main type of food for giant pandas.
D Bamboo has many uses.

_____ Something might tickle the inside of your nose. This could be pollen, dust, or pepper. When you sneeze, several groups of muscles work together. They force

air out of you. Small water droplets from your nose can move as fast as 100 miles an hour when you sneeze.

3. **A** When you sneeze, water droplets can travel 15 to 20 feet.
B Bright light makes some people sneeze.
C A sneeze clears your nose by forcing out air.
D You should always cover your face during a sneeze.

Topic Sentences: Main Idea

The **topic sentence** of a paragraph tells what the paragraph is about. It tells the **main idea** of the paragraph. The main idea is the writer's most important point. The topic sentence is often at the beginning of a paragraph. However, it can be in the middle or at the end of the paragraph.

► Read each passage. Then choose the topic sentence.

Many children have played with jumping beans. You can find them for sale in many parts of the Southwestern United States. They are often sold in small shops or on street corners. Jumping beans are small seed parts. The seeds look like tan or brown beans. They move slightly, or jump, when they are touched. There is a simple way to explain why jumping beans move. The seed comes from the flower of the jumping-bean shrub. During the spring and summer months, a moth lays its eggs on the flower. The moth eggs end up inside the seeds. Then the eggs hatch into moth larvae. The larvae eat the inside of the seed. When the larvae feel heat, they move around inside the seed. This is what causes the seed to "jump."

1. **A** Many children have played with jumping beans.
B The seeds look like tan or brown beans.
C There is a simple way to explain why jumping beans move.
D This is what causes the seeds to "jump."

The Oklahoma Land Run of 1889 was an unusual way to get land. Oklahoma was not a state in 1889. The U.S. government owned all the land. There were two million acres. The government decided to give away the land free. A settler could get 160 acres of land. But then the settlers had to live on the land for five years. They also had to begin using the land. They could farm or set up a shop on the land. After five years they would own the land. The Land Run took place on April 22. About 50,000 people surrounded the area that was being given away. There were farmers and other workers. At noon they rushed to get a piece of free land. It was a huge race to get the best places. Many people began setting up their homes right away. Within one week, the settlers had opened schools for their children. In 1907 Oklahoma became a state.

2. **A** The Oklahoma Land Run of 1889 was an unusual way to get land.
B A settler could get 160 acres of land.
C At noon they rushed to get a piece of free land.
D In 1907 Oklahoma became a state.

Unrelated Sentences

All the sentences in a paragraph must work together to tell more about the **topic sentence**. **Unrelated sentences** do not give details about the topic sentence. Unrelated sentences should be removed from a paragraph.

► **Read each paragraph. Circle the answer to each question.**

Wilma Rudolph was a great American runner. She set many world records. Rudolph began running in high school. While in high school, she trained with a college track team. When Rudolph was just 16 years old, she ran in her first Olympics. She won a bronze medal. In 1960, she set a world record in the 200-meter race. Then

she went to the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. There she won three gold medals. She was the first American woman to do this. Another American woman who won three gold medals was Florence Griffith Joyner. People called Rudolph the "World's Fastest Woman."

1. Which of these is the topic sentence?
 - A Wilma Rudolph was a great American runner.
 - B Rudolph began running in high school.
 - C When Rudolph was just 16 years old, she ran in her first Olympics.
 - D People called Rudolph the "World's Fastest Woman."
2. Which sentence does NOT belong in the paragraph?
 - A While in high school, she trained with a college track team.
 - B Then she went to the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome.
 - C There she won three gold medals.
 - D Another American woman who won three gold medals was Florence Griffith Joyner.

Rudolph faced many difficulties as a child. For one thing, her family was very poor. There were 22 children in her family. She was born too early, and she weighed less than five pounds at birth. As a child, she was often sick. Then she got a disease

called polio. Today most children get a vaccine to prevent polio. She was unable to use her left leg. As a result, she had to wear a brace on her leg when she was six. Once a week, she got special treatments for her leg.

3. Which sentence does NOT belong in the paragraph?
 - A For one thing, her family was very poor.
 - B As a child, she was often sick.
 - C Today most children get a vaccine to prevent polio.
 - D As a result, she had to wear a brace on her leg when she was six.

Unrelated Sentences

A **paragraph** is a group of sentences that are all about the same topic. The **topic sentence** states the writer's main point. Other sentences in the paragraph should support the topic sentence. An **unrelated sentence** does not support the topic sentence. Unrelated sentences do not belong in the paragraph. They should be removed.

► **Read each paragraph. Circle the topic sentence. Underline the sentence that does not belong. On the line, explain why that sentence does not belong.**

Suntans are popular today, but they haven't always been. In the past, people tried to stay out of the sun. They wore big hats to protect their faces. They carried umbrellas to block the sun's rays. People valued pale skin. Tan skin showed that you worked outdoors. Only farmers and other people who worked outdoors had tan skin. Then some women began to tan their skin because they thought they would look more beautiful. They also began to wear bikinis on beaches. Today doctors warn people to protect their skin from sunlight. Too much sunlight can cause skin cancer.

1. Reason: _____

Watermelon is a tasty summer fruit. The Watermelon Thump in Luling, Texas, celebrates this fruit each year. The Thump includes a parade. There is even a watermelon queen. The festival has many contests. Some people compete to see who can eat the most of this sweet fruit. Men, women, and children all compete in a seed-spitting contest. They see how far they can spit the seeds. The winners get cash prizes. Many new types of watermelon don't have seeds. There is also a prize for the biggest watermelon.

2. Reason: _____

Jackrabbits are large hares that live in North America. Several body features help them survive. They have very large ears that help cool their bodies. Their ears also help them hear predators. Hearing predators is important because many animals like to eat jackrabbits. Jackrabbits mostly eat plants. They have large, strong back legs. Their legs help them run fast. Jackrabbits can run 40 miles per hour. They can jump more than 10 feet.

3. Reason: _____