PART II

From Grammar to Writing

Topic Sentences

A common way of organizing a composition or other piece of writing in English is to begin with a **topic sentence.** A topic sentence is a general sentence that covers the content of the entire paragraph. All the supporting examples and details of the paragraph must fit under this sentence. It is usually the first sentence in the paragraph. Look at this paragraph from an essay.

> For me, a dog is a better pet than a cat. When I come home from work, for example, my dog comes to meet me at the door. He is always glad to see me. My cat, on the other hand, couldn't care less whether I'm at home or not, as long as I keep filling her food dish. Another good thing about a dog is that you can teach him tricks. Cats, however, can't be bothered to learn anything new. The best thing about a dog, though, is that he's a great companion. I can take my dog on hikes and walks. He goes everywhere with me. As we all know, you can't take a cat for a walk.

The topic sentence for this paragraph is "For me, a dog is a better pet than a cat." This sentence tells the reader what to expect in the paragraph: some reasons why the writer considers a dog a superior pet.

1 *This paragraph contains many supporting details but no topic sentence. Read the paragraph. Then circle the letter of the best topic sentence for the paragraph.*

> For one thing, you should always remove your shoes when you enter a Japanese home, and you should leave them pointing toward the door. Another suggestion is to make sure that you bring a gift for your Japanese hosts, and to be sure to wrap it. A third recommendation is to be appreciative of things in a Japanese house, but not too appreciative. Finally, remember that when you sit down to eat, you do not have to accept every kind of food that you are offered, but you are expected to finish whatever you do put on your plate.

Choices

a. Visiting a Japanese home is very enjoyable.

b. Taking a gift is very important when you visit a Japanese home.

c. There are a number of things to keep in mind when you visit a Japanese home.

d. When you visit a Japanese home, be sure not to eat too much.

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Remember that an English sentence must contain a subject and a verb in at least one independent clause. The following groups of words are potential topic sentences, but they are fragments (they are not independent clauses, or they lack a subject or verb):

Reasons why the birth order theory makes sense. (not an independent clause)

Correction: There are several reasons why the birth order theory makes sense.

Relaxing and doing nothing. (no verb)

Correction: Relaxing and doing nothing can be beneficial sometimes.

2 *Each of the following word groups is a fragment but is also a potential topic sentence. Make necessary additions to each.*

1. A city where exciting and mysterious things happen.

_____

2. Reasons why college isn't for everybody.

_____

3. Wild animals not making good pets.

_____

4. Regular exercise and its benefits.

_____

3 *Read this paragraph. Then look at the four possible topic sentences. With a partner, discuss which one is the best. Why? What is wrong with each of the other choices?*

One reason is that when commercial flights began, all pilots were male. Men were hired because they had flight experience obtained in combat. Women, not having been in combat, had no flight experience. A second reason is simply prejudice: The powers in the airline industry presumably believed the stereotype that there are certain jobs that women cannot do as well as men. A third reason is inertia and the status quo—flying has mostly been a male-dominated profession since it began, and it takes time to change things. Eventually we will see more and more female commercial airline pilots, but for the present, old ideas die hard.

Choices

a. Why there are so few women commercial pilots today.

b. There are three principal reasons why there are so few women commercial pilots today.

c. Women pilots in aviation.

d. Men are still prejudiced about women's capabilities.

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4 *Look at the following sets of supporting details. For each set, write an appropriate topic sentence.*

1. _____

   a. For one thing, there's almost always a traffic jam I get stuck in, and I'm often late to work.
   b. Also, there's not always a parking place when I do get to work.
   c. Worst of all, I'm spending more money on gas and car maintenance than I would if I took public transportation.

2. _____

   a. One is that I often fall asleep when watching the TV screen, no matter how interesting the video is.
   b. Another is that watching movies is basically a social experience, and I'm usually alone when I watch videos.
   c. The main reason is that the TV screen, no matter how large it is, diminishes the impact that you get when watching a movie on the big screen.

3. _____

   a. Nothing spontaneous usually happens on a guided tour, but I've had lots of spontaneous experiences when I planned my own vacation.
   b. Tour guides present you with what *they* think is interesting, but when you are in charge of your own vacation, you do what *you* think is interesting.
   c. Individually planned vacations can often be less expensive than guided tours.

4. _____

   a. Cats don't bark and wake up the neighbors or bite the letter carrier.
   b. Dogs have to be walked at least two times a day, but cats handle their own exercise.
   c. Cats eat a lot less than dogs.

5 *Write a paragraph of several sentences about one of the following topics, a similar topic that interests you, or a topic suggested by your teacher. Make sure that your paragraph has a topic sentence. Then share your work with three or four other students. Read each other's paragraphs. Identify topic sentences. Make sure that each one is not a fragment and that it is appropriate for the paragraph.*

Topics

- An annoying habit
- The best part of the day
- Night owls versus early birds
- The ideal vacation
- A problem in society
- Expectation versus reality

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PART II

Review Test

I *Read the conversations between a job interviewer and various applicants. Fill in the blanks using the cues in parentheses. Use full forms for auxiliaries used to emphasize or show stress; use contracted forms for all other auxiliaries.*

1. **A:** What languages are you familiar with, Ms. Suzuki? Do you speak Mandarin?

   B: No, I _____don't speak_____ Mandarin. I _____do speak_____ Japanese
   a. (not / speak) b. (speak)
   and Spanish, though.

   A: Are you fluent in those languages?

   B: I _____ fluent in Japanese. I _____ fluent
   c. (be) d. (not / be)
   in Spanish, but I _____ conversant in it.
   e. (be)

2. **A:** Mr. Quinn, your résumé says that you attended college. Did you earn a bachelor's degree?

   B: No, I _____ a B.A. I _____ an associate
   a. (not / earn) b. (earn)
   degree, though.

3. **A:** Ms. Liu, this job requires overseas experience. Have you lived abroad?

   B: I _____ abroad, but I _____ extensively in
   a. (not / live) b. (travel)
   Europe and Eastern Asia.

4. **A:** Mr. Travolta, this _____ a full-time position. It
   a. (not / be)
   _____ a three-quarter-time job, however, and it
   b. (be)
   _____ an extensive benefits package. Are you interested?
   c. (have)

   B: The job sounds interesting. I _____ some time to think it over,
   d. (would like)
   though. Could I let you know by next Monday?

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II *Complete the conversations using* **so, neither, too,** *or* **not either** *plus the appropriate auxiliary to make additions. Use contractions whenever possible.*

1. **A:** Avocados have a disgusting texture, I think. I can't stand them.
   B: Neither can I. They're at the bottom of my list.
2. **A:** What did you think of *The Lord of the Rings*? I thought it was pretty neat.
   B: _____ I. I really liked Viggo Mortenson and Elijah Wood.
3. **A:** Janice has never been to Mexico City.
   B: Joe _____. He wants to go this summer, though.
4. **A:** Helena won't be able to come to the party Wednesday afternoon.
   B: _____ Josh. He has a doctor's appointment.
5. **A:** How do you feel about hunting whales? I'm against it.
   B: I _____. I can understand both sides of the issue, but it still seems cruel to the whales.
6. **A:** Did you hear that Bill spent $2,000 on a new bicycle? I wouldn't spend that much.
   B: _____ I. There are better things to do with your money.
7. **A:** Can you believe it? Mandy had never heard of Peter Jackson.
   B: Well, I _____ before *The Lord of the Rings* came out. You just can't know everything.
8. **A:** I can't believe it! My mother says she believes in UFOs.
   B: Really? _____ my mother. She says she saw one once.

III *Complete this letter to a columnist and the columnist's response. Circle the correct modals and modal-like expressions.*

Dear Pamela:

My wife, Jeannine, and I invited a Japanese colleague to dinner last week. We'd invited her once before, but she'd (had to) / must decline (1.) because of other commitments. This time, she was able to come. Things were going well at first. Yoko, my co-worker, seemed a little nervous, but that was understandable. I thought she was probably trying to remember how you 'd better / 're supposed to (2.) act when you visit an American home. She brought a beautifully wrapped present, which my wife opened right away. Yoko seemed to think Jeannine shouldn't have / must not have (3.) done that,

(continued)

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because she looked upset. I thought maybe in Japan you don't have to / aren't supposed to (4.) tear the paper. Maybe you could / 're supposed to (5.) take it off gently and fold it, or something. Anyway, my wife tore it off and pulled out a box of excellent chocolates. She should have / might have (6.) waited until after dinner, but she insisted on passing them around and having everyone eat some of them. Before dinner! Yoko was embarrassed. She said she thought she should bring / should have brought (7.) something else for a gift. Pamela, what went wrong? It think it was all Jeannine's fault.

Puzzled in Pittsburgh

Dear Puzzled:

You aren't allowed to / don't have to (8.) blame anybody for this problem. It's a clear case of cultural misunderstanding. What you must / are to (9.) understand is that in Japan when someone takes a gift to a friend's house, the friend shouldn't / doesn't have to (10.) open it in front of the visitor. It is more polite to wait until later to open it, so it was probably something of a shock to your Japanese friend to see your wife make such a big scene. That's not what one might have done / is supposed to do (11.) in Japan.

Don't be too concerned about it. I'm sure your friend will understand when you explain to her and apologize.

Pamela

IV *Read the story. Fill in the blanks with modals or modal-like expressions.*

One of the most puzzling experiences I've ever had happened last winter. It was one of those typical dark and stormy nights that you read about in mystery novels. Sitting on the sofa in the living room, I could hear thunder and see an occasional flash of lightning. It must have (1.) been at least 1:00 A.M. I was reading an exciting mystery novel. Suddenly the phone rang, startling me out of my wits. I picked up the receiver, muttering to myself something like, "Who _____ (2.) that be at this hour of the night? Someone _____ (3.) died." But no. There were a few seconds of silence; then a low, scary voice said, "Help me. Help me." "Who are you?" I asked. "Who is this?" No answer. The phone went dead.

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The next morning it all seemed like a bad dream. I was troubled enough by the experience to tell my friend Josh about it. "It _____ 4. been a crank call," he said. "Or it _____ 5. been one of your friends playing a joke on you."

"What do you think I _____ 6. do?"

"Do? Why do anything? It won't happen again."

It did happen again, though, the following night. At precisely 1:12 A.M. (I looked at my watch this time) the phone rang, waking me out of a sound sleep. The same deep, scary voice was on the other end of the line. I responded in the same way, but the voice just said, "Help me, help me." Then there was silence, and the line went dead as before.

The next day I told Josh about it again. "I still say it _____ 7. to be some friend of yours playing a joke. Don't you recognize the voice?"

"Not at all," I said. "It _____ 8. be anyone I know."

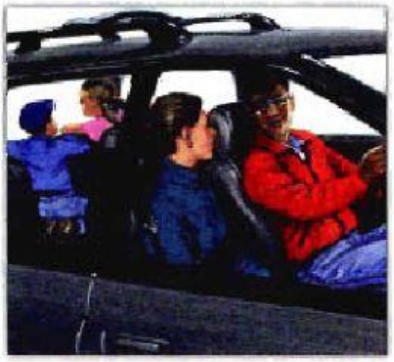
"Well, call the phone company. They _____ 9. have an idea about what to do."

I never did call the phone company, for some reason. This experience went on for the next five nights. At precisely 1:12 A.M., the phone would ring, and I would pick it up, only to hear the same thing: "Help me, help me." After that, it stopped. Since then I haven't stopped wondering if I _____ 10. called the police.

I wonder if it _____ 11. been someone who needed help. Or was it just a joke? I _____ 12. never find out.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

V *Look at the pictures. Write a sentence using the modal or modal-like expression in parentheses to describe each situation, making sure to use the correct form.*

1. 

(should)

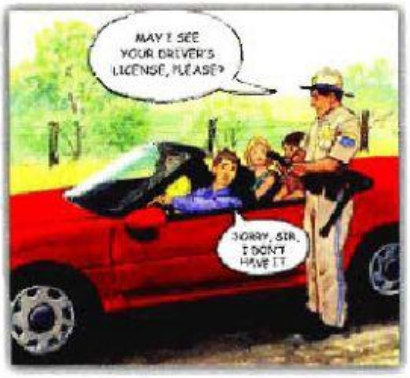
They should all be wearing their seat belts.

2.

(must)

3.

(had better)

4. 

(be supposed to)

5.

(might)

6.

(could)

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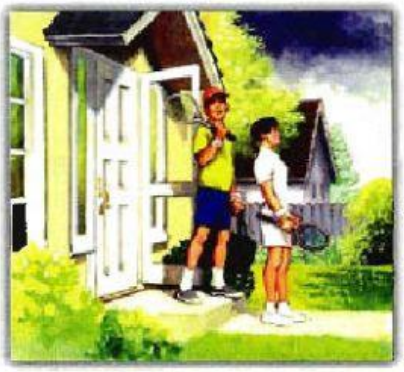
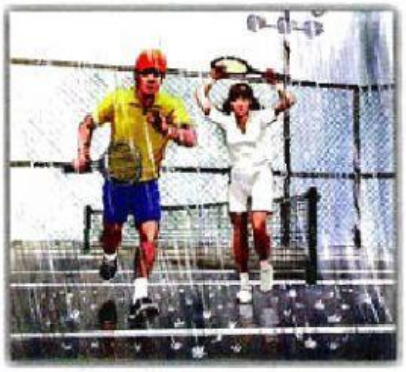
7. 

(may)

_____

_____

8. 

(should)

_____

_____

VI *Circle the letter of the one underlined word or phrase in each sentence that is not correct.*

1. I think we ought look into a nice guided tour—that is, if we can find one that won't bankrupt us. **(A)** B C D

2. Fortunately, I was able to get a scholarship to attend college, and my sister was either; otherwise, we never could have afforded it. A B C D

3. You had better to set your alarm, or you might not wake up on time. A B C D

4. The only idea I have as to why Joe isn't here is that he might have been working late. A B C D

5. All employees were to attend the company party on Saturday, and everyone should bring a present for the gift exchange. A B C D

6. Frank has always been against capital punishment, and so had I. A B C D

7. We ought to take some extra cash along on the trip, but we absolutely don't have to forget our passports. A B C D

8. Joe called to say that he won't be able to get here by seven o'clock, but he shouldn't manage to be here by eight. A B C D

(continued)

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