

## PART 2

# Developing a Paragraph

## Rhetorical Focus

### Paragraph Organization

A typical paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

- The **topic sentence** introduces the topic and tells what the writer will say about the topic.
- The sentences that follow further explain and support the topic sentence. They are called **supporting sentences**.
- The **concluding sentence** often repeats the information in the topic sentence in a different way.

### Exercise 1 Reading a student paragraph

Read the paragraph below and note the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. What was it that scared the barefoot boy?

#### Barefoot Boy

topic sentence

I had a scary experience when I was a young boy. One evening while my parents were eating dinner, I was playing barefoot in the yard with my toys. Even now I still remember the perfume of the flowers and the moisture of the grass. While I was sitting on the grass and playing with a truck, I looked up at the sky, and my attention was distracted by the beauty of the stars. Then I felt something cold and smooth slide over my feet. I stayed perfectly still, but I looked down at my feet. Then I saw a snake slowly slithering over my toes. I felt terrible and afraid, so my heart beat very fast. After the snake moved away, I screamed to my parents for help, and they captured the snake and took it away. The experience frightened me, and I never went outside barefoot again.

supporting sentences

concluding sentence

## Exercise 2 Analyzing the student paragraph

Examine the organization of the paragraph by answering the questions.

1. What is the topic sentence? Write it below.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How many supporting sentences are there? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In your opinion, do the supporting sentences explain the topic sentence? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Write the concluding sentence below.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Does the concluding sentence repeat the information in the topic sentence in a new way? \_\_\_\_\_

## Rhetorical Focus

### The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is usually the first or second sentence in a paragraph. It introduces a new idea. It presents the topic and explains what the writer will say about the topic. This explanation is called the **controlling idea**.

Read the following topic sentences. In each one, the topic is *my friend*. The controlling ideas explain what the writer will say about the topic. These controlling ideas tell the reader what to expect in the supporting sentences.

**topic**

**controlling idea**

**My friend** is an honest person.

**My friend** is the funniest person I know.

**My friend** has a terribly dangerous job.

A topic sentence must not be a simple fact or a specific detail. The controlling idea must say something about the topic that can then be supported, developed, or demonstrated in the supporting sentences. The controlling idea must also not be too general, or the topic sentence will be unclear.

A surprise party is a kind of party. (too general)

There were 14 guests at my surprise birthday party. (too specific)

My classmates gave me an unforgettable surprise party for my 18th birthday.

The last topic sentence is effective because it introduces the **topic** and has a controlling idea that can be developed in the **supporting sentences**. The paragraph will probably tell the story of the **party**.

### Exercise 3 **Identifying topics and controlling ideas**

In each topic sentence below, circle the topic and underline the controlling idea.

1. (Hiking) is the best way to explore nature closely.
2. My uncle had a frightening experience as a young man.
3. Text messaging has become popular among teenagers.
4. Effective time management requires four easy steps.
5. Every college student should take a computer course.

### Exercise 4 **Identifying effective topic sentences**

In each sentence below, circle the topic and underline the controlling idea. If the sentence does not contain an effective controlling idea, write an X in the blank. For the effective topic sentences, write what you think the supporting sentences will be about.

1. My doctor is very kind to his patients.  
The writer will give examples of ways in which his doctor is kind to patients.
2.        Fried rice is easy to prepare if you follow some simple steps.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3.        I am going to write about my country.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4.        I had an adventure in the jungle last year.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5.        Video games are not bad for children.  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Exercise 5 **Writing topic sentences**

Use each word or phrase below to write a topic sentence with a controlling idea. Then share your sentences with a partner.

1. Pets  
Pets are good companions for older people.
2. A first date  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. A terrible teacher  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Tennis  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Rhetorical Focus

### Supporting Sentences

Supporting sentences add information about the topic and the controlling idea. Supporting sentences can include **definitions**, **explanations**, and **examples**. Read the topic sentence below. Then study the types of supporting sentences that might follow it.

topic

controlling idea

**Young people** are too dependent on computers.

#### Supporting definition

Dependency on computers means that young people cannot perform the normal tasks and functions of daily life without them.

#### Supporting explanation

In the old days, people memorized important information, but today's youth rely on their computers, cell phones, and PDA's to do assignments, record numbers, and save important information. As a result, they can find themselves unprepared in an emergency such as an electrical blackout. Once their batteries die, these people will not be able communicate.

#### Supporting example

For example, I do all my schoolwork on my computer. When my computer crashed last week, I lost my only draft of an essay that was due the next day. As a result, I got a bad grade.

### Exercise 6 Identifying topic sentences and supporting sentences

**For each set of sentences, write *TS* next to the topic sentence. Write *SS* next to the supporting sentences.**

1. SS a. Mosquitoes are attracted to heat.  
SS b. Mosquitoes will fly several miles to find food.  
SS c. Only the female mosquito bites.  
TS d. Mosquitoes are interesting insects.
2. \_\_\_\_ a. One of my hobbies is listening to international music.  
\_\_\_\_ b. I have a large collection of world music recordings.  
\_\_\_\_ c. My friends and I like to introduce each other to new international artists we discover.  
\_\_\_\_ d. I enjoy going to concerts by musicians from different countries.



3. \_\_\_\_ a. I like the way people decorate their homes and stores.  
\_\_\_\_ b. I enjoy going shopping in cold weather.  
\_\_\_\_ c. I enjoy the parties and celebrations of the winter holiday.  
\_\_\_\_ d. I really like the winter holidays.
4. \_\_\_\_ a. My new apartment has big closets.  
\_\_\_\_ b. My new apartment is perfect for my roommate and me.  
\_\_\_\_ c. My new apartment is close to school and work.  
\_\_\_\_ d. My new apartment is not too expensive for students.

## Rhetorical Focus

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### The Concluding Sentence

The concluding, or final, sentence of a paragraph usually reminds the reader of the topic and controlling idea of the paragraph. The concluding sentence restates the main idea.

#### Topic sentence

I love the color red.

#### Concluding sentence

I like to live life in a strong way, so I think I will always admire the color red.

In addition to restating the main idea, the concluding sentence may:

- warn the reader.

If you do not follow these steps, you may not get the grade that you want.

- make a prediction.

The automotive industry will change, and soon everyone will be driving pollution-free cars.

- give an opinion about the topic.

Some people might disagree, but I think lamb is the best meat for grilling.

Sometimes writers signal the concluding sentence by using the phrase *In conclusion*.

In conclusion, learning a second language has many advantages.

**Exercise 7 Identifying supporting sentences and concluding sentences**

**Read the topic sentences below. Write *SS* next to the three supporting sentences and write *CS* next to the concluding sentence.**

1. The best way to see San Francisco is by walking.
  - CS a. When you explore San Francisco by foot, you can experience all the city has to offer.
  - SS b. When you walk, you experience the different smells of the restaurants, the plants and sometimes the ocean.
  - SS c. You can stop and look in the windows of shops or sit on a bench for a short while and look at interesting people.
  - SS d. In a car or a bus, you cannot stop easily if you see something interesting because parking is difficult.
2. An egg taco takes only five minutes to make.
  - \_\_\_ a. Your delicious egg taco is ready to eat in just a few minutes.
  - \_\_\_ b. Heat a flour tortilla in a small amount of water.
  - \_\_\_ c. Scramble two eggs with a little salt and pepper.
  - \_\_\_ d. When the eggs are done, slide them into the warm tortilla and fold it over.
3. My paper is late because something happened to my computer.
  - \_\_\_ a. I was almost finished writing my paper, and I was checking it for errors.
  - \_\_\_ b. Suddenly, my computer screen went blank, and the power was gone.
  - \_\_\_ c. The accident made me lose many hours of work, so I could not turn in my essay on time.
  - \_\_\_ d. Later, I learned that a squirrel got on the power line and disrupted the electricity.
4. I enjoy the riverwalk in San Antonio.
  - \_\_\_ a. The riverwalk is lower than the streets of the city.
  - \_\_\_ b. You can walk down stairs to a canal with a stone path and plants on each side.
  - \_\_\_ c. There are many shops, restaurants and hotels along the path.
  - \_\_\_ d. The riverwalk is a pleasant place to spend an afternoon or evening in San Antonio.

## Exercise 8 Examining concluding sentences

**Circle the word that best describes each of the concluding sentences below.**

1. If you follow these steps, you will never lose your keys again.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning
2. Students who are not careful with credit cards can go into debt quickly.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning
3. Venice, Italy, is the most beautiful city in the world.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning
4. You will be able to produce a beautiful paper crane with only a little bit of practice.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning
5. There are many reasons why movie stars make poor politicians.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning
6. The desert is a beautiful but dangerous place to hike, so do your research and take time to prepare carefully.  
a. prediction                      b. opinion                      c. warning

**In Part 3 you will ...**

- learn about unity and coherence in paragraphs.