

Academic Writing:  
the paragraph and  

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topic sentence

# WHAT IS A PARAGRAPH?

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- a distinct section of writing on a topic that has the following:
  - **UNITY:** it focuses on one main idea
  - **COHERENCE:** a paragraph is clearly organized; sentences need to be linked to each other
  - **DEVELOPMENT:** the main point should be backed up by a reference; the paragraph needs to use examples or evidence to illustrate the point

# THE TOPIC SENTENCE

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- it usually (but not always) starts the paragraph; the other sentences should relate to the topic sentence.
- the two main parts include the **topic**, which **names the subject** or main idea, and the ***controlling idea***, which makes a **comment** on the main idea.
- **Formalization**, an important element of organizational structure, ***has implications for management at both the macro- and micro-levels.***

# TOPIC SENTENCE

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- specific enough to be clear and interesting
- NOT a general fact that everyone accepts as true
- linked to the thesis statement of the whole text
- supported by evidence and examples in the paragraph (T-E-E structure)

*Task 1 – Find the topic sentence in the following paragraphs:*

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Does a hot, humid summer's day make you unproductive? Does a rainy day make you depressed? The weather we experience seems to have a significant effect on people's moods. Hot weather makes some people irritable, while others love the heat and are very happy and cheerful on a summer's day. Others don't mind the heat, but say they dislike it when it is humid, because the humidity makes them tired.

Does a hot, humid summer's day make you unproductive? Does a rainy day make you depressed? **The weather we experience seems to have a significant effect on people's moods.** Hot weather makes some people irritable, while others love the heat and are very happy and cheerful on a summer's day. Others don't mind the heat, but say they dislike it when it is humid, because the humidity makes them tired.

*Task 2 – Create an informative **topic sentence** for the following paragraph:*

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First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All citizens have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, the country's cities are clean and efficiently managed. They have many services and parks near to where most people live. As a result, Canadian cities often rank in international studies among the most desirable places to live (2018).

*A possible topic sentence (there are many possibilities)*

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There are several public services through which Canada provides opportunities to achieve a high standard of living. First, Canada has an excellent health care system. All citizens have access to medical services at a reasonable price. Second, Canada has a high standard of education. Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. Finally, the country's cities are clean and efficiently managed. They have many services and parks near to where most people live. As a result, Canadian cities often rank in international studies among the most desirable places to live (2022).

*Task 3 – Create a suitable **topic sentence** for the following paragraph:*

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Albert Einstein, one of the world's geniuses, failed his university entrance examinations on his first attempt. William Faulkner, one of America's noted writers, never finished college because he could not pass his English courses. Sir Winston Churchill, who is considered one of the masters of the English language, had to have special tutoring in English during elementary school.

*A possible **topic sentence** (there are many possibilities)*

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**Failure in school does not always precede failure in life.** Albert Einstein, one of the world's geniuses, failed his university entrance examinations on his first attempt. William Faulkner, one of America's noted writers, never finished college because he could not pass his English courses. Sir Winston Churchill, who is considered one of the masters of the English language, had to have special tutoring in English during elementary school.

*Task 4 – Create a topic sentence for the following paragraph on the topic of formalization:*

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The word itself literally means having things written down. At the macro-level, the company will need to focus on organizational features. An example of formalization at this level is drawing up a chart detailing roles and responsibilities within the company. At the micro-level, its features would include clear stipulation of job descriptions, policies, procedures and rules. Although such documents may vary considerably in format, function and detail, they do share one underlying characteristic. Basically, they are all examples of codification that specify what will be done, who will do it and how they will do it.

*A possible topic sentence (there are many possibilities):*

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Formalization, an important element of organizational structure, has implications for management at both the macro- and micro-levels. The word itself literally means having things written down. At the macro-level, the company will need to focus on organizational features. An example of formalization at this level is drawing up a chart detailing roles and responsibilities within the company. At the micro-level, its features would include clear stipulation of job descriptions, policies, procedures and rules. Although such documents may vary considerably in format, function and detail, they do share one underlying characteristic. Fundamentally, they are all examples of codification which specify what will be done, who will do it and how they will do it.

# References:

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