

## THE MAIN THING

In reading, you would be confused if the writer didn't use topic sentences to express his or her main idea. After all, getting the main idea is what reading is mostly about. So, as you read, be on the lookout for a topic sentence (it often appears at the beginning of a paragraph, but sometimes is in the middle or at the end). Topic sentences should clearly summarize the main idea of a paragraph. Let them be your guide to better understanding of what you read.

The authors of the following paragraphs each forgot to include the all-important topic sentence. Read each paragraph and see if you can determine the main idea by paying close attention to details and seeing how they fit together to express one basic thought. Then, on the line provided, write a topic sentence that you think would be fitting for each separate paragraph.

1. On Thursday I went to my office earlier than usual, arriving at about 7:00 a.m. Nobody saw me go in because people generally don't start work until almost 10. I didn't make or receive any calls, so when the police arrived I was quite surprised and found their questions very exasperating. The only concrete evidence I could offer them was a sales reports which I wrote between 7 and 10.

**Topic sentence:**

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2. At first, you may feel awkward because of the cumbersome equipment. It does take some getting used to. But if you take lessons, and try to overcome your fear of heights, nothing is more exhilarating. Just being in the great outdoors makes it worth it. So what if you fall a few times? Nobody's watching you. Everyone's too busy enjoying the snow, the fresh air, and the sheer joy of maneuvering their bodies across the snow.

**Topic sentence:**

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3. Her palms were sweaty. In less than an hour, she would be on the road with Miss Brooke. "Will Miss Brooke notice how nervous I am?" Sheila wondered. Trying to calm herself down, she reviewed the written questions one more time. Then she picked up the keys and shouted to her mother downstairs. "Okay, Ma, I'm ready!" Sheila walked downstairs, smiling and thinking to herself that this might be the last time she would need a ride.

**Topic sentence:**

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4. Write an original paragraph on the lines below. Then exchange papers with a classmate who has also written one paragraph. Underline the topic sentence in your classmate's paragraph. Then write down your suggestion for another topic sentence that clearly summarizes the main idea in that paragraph.
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