

Lesson 1
Day 1

Date: _____

Main Topic, Details,
and Staying on Topic

A **main topic** is a thought or idea that provides general guidance for a writing. A main topic tells what the writing will be about. A main topic is not necessarily a complete sentence; it can be any thought ranging from a sentence or more, to a single word.

A. Write an **X** on the lines below which are acceptable as main topics.

1. ___ submarines
2. ___ cats
3. ___ the process of blacktopping a driveway
4. ___ how to fix a car
5. ___ clouds

B. What is the **main topic** of the four sentences below?

1. There are many types of nails that are used to build houses.
2. Lumber used to build a deck must be pressure treated.
3. Shingles need to be of high quality if the roof is going to last.
4. Make sure to use thick insulation to ensure efficient heating and cooling.

C. If we were to add the following sentence to the four sentences above, would it fit appropriately into a paragraph? Circle the correct answer.

Cinder blocks and mortar are used to build a strong foundation.

yes or no

Lesson 1
Day 2

Date: _____

Main Topic, Details,
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A. Which of the following sentences would **not** belong in a paragraph with the given **main topic**? Write an **X** by each sentence that does not belong.

1. Main Topic: **educational subjects**

- a. ___ I am taking Algebra this year.
- b. ___ My neighbor is Ms. Walters.
- c. ___ A good writing course will help me communicate more effectively.
- d. ___ History is one of my favorite subjects.

2. Main Topic: **countries**

- a. ___ Venezuela is located in South America.
- b. ___ Canada is located in North America.
- c. ___ Asia is a large continent.
- d. ___ Japan is a small country located in Asia.

3. Main Topic: **types of food**

- a. ___ Italian foods usually include a lot of pasta based dishes.
- b. ___ Japanese foods usually have fresh fish and vegetables as ingredients.
- c. ___ American cuisine is varied and uses a lot of beef and vegetables.
- d. ___ Some fields are used to grow plants that yield high levels of sugar for bio-fuels.

4. Main Topic: **modes of transportation**

- a. ___ I mow the lawn every week with my father.
- b. ___ Spaceships travel through space.
- c. ___ My two feet will take me about anywhere I wish to go.
- d. ___ A unicycle is tricky but fun to ride.

Main Topic, Details, and Staying on Topic

All writings have a main topic and details that make up the writing. Even the smallest single paragraph has a main topic (unless it is a rambling nonsensical paragraph). Of course all writings have details that form the body of the writing.

Regardless of the type of writing, it will consist of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph should have the following three parts: a **topic sentence**, **detail sentences**, and an **ending sentence**.

The first sentence of a paragraph is usually the **topic sentence**. It is slightly indented (to the right) in relation to the rest of the paragraph. The **topic sentence** tells **generally** what the paragraph is about, but it does not provide specific detail about the paragraph. The topic sentence's primary purpose is to get the attention of the reader.

The **detail sentences** come after the topic sentence and form the **body** of the paragraph. The **body** of the paragraph is perhaps the most important part of the paragraph since it contains the detail of what the paragraph is about. All detail sentences should be related to the **topic sentence**, which means that the **detail sentences** should only discuss things that are suggested by the **topic sentence**. Making sure that the **detail sentences** and **topic sentence** are related within a paragraph is called **staying on topic**.

The **ending sentence** restates the topic sentence (using different words) and can also summarize the information contained in the detail sentences.

A. Answer the following questions.

1. Which part of a paragraph is probably the most important?
 - a. detail sentences
 - b. topic sentence
 - c. ending sentence
 - d. the main topic

2. What is a topic sentence supposed to do?
 - a. It tells the reader all about the following paragraph.
 - b. It summarizes the paragraph before it.
 - c. It provides an ending to the ending sentence.
 - d. It grabs the attention of the reader.

3. What is the goal of the detail sentences?
 - a. to physically fit into the paragraph
 - b. to stay on topic with the topic sentence
 - c. to set up the ending sentence
 - d. to have at least ten words

4. What is the body of a paragraph made from?
 - a. detail sentences
 - b. topic sentences
 - c. the topic sentence and the detail sentences
 - d. none of the above

B. Circle the following main topic that would be the best fit for each paragraph below.

1. I like to sit on the swing on the back porch and watch the world go by. Right behind my house is a busy road. I can watch the many different types of cars, trucks, bicycles, and people moving by. Sometimes my whole family sits on the porch and watches the clouds roll in. Sometimes this means a storm is on the way. As soon as it starts raining, we go inside.

- a. things to do outside
- b. things my family likes to do together
- c. we like watching things as we sit on the swing
- d. swings are a great place to sit

2. Picking a place to eat can be a big job. First of all you have to ask those who will be dining with you if they have a preference for a particular type of food. Next, you need to decide how much time you have to eat your meal (fast food or a sit-down dinner). Then, you need to decide how much money you want to spend on dinner. Lastly, you need to find out if there are any restaurants nearby that satisfy the answers to the preceding questions.

- a. going out to eat is fun
- b. it can be hard to find the right restaurant
- c. some people do not like eating the same things as others
- d. it's easy to find a place to eat where everyone agrees

Lesson 1
Day 4

Date: _____

Main Topic, Details,
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A. Write your own topic sentence and an ending sentence for the main topic **pizza**.

Topic Sentence:

Write your own four detail sentences for the main topic **pizza**.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

B. Ending Sentence:

Lesson 1
Day 5

Date: _____

Main Topic, Details,
and Staying on Topic

- A. Use the information you wrote during Day 4 about pizza to write a paragraph. Start the paragraph by writing the topic sentence, followed by the detail sentences, and then finally the ending sentence.
