

Three Steps for Writing the Body of Your Paper

1. Write a topic sentence for each supporting point in your thesis.
2. Review the ideas you plan to discuss about each supporting point.
3. Write the first draft.

WRITING TOPIC SENTENCES

Each main section of your paper will expand on one of the supporting points from your thesis statement. While the sections may vary in length, their basic structure will be similar. Each new section will begin with a topic sentence that refers to a separate supporting point in your thesis. Linking the main idea of each section to the thesis statement helps the reader remember the larger goal of the paper, and directs her to the specific focus of each part.

A good topic sentence has three qualities:

- It logically connects to the topic of the thesis
- It logically connects to the focus of the thesis
- It repeats a supporting point, but expresses it in a different way

To see in detail how topic sentences connect to your thesis, look at the thesis statement and topic sentences from a student paper on communication problems between younger and older people.

Thesis Statement: Emphasis on individualism, loss of focus on extended families, and overscheduled lifestyles are three reasons for the generation gap between younger and older people.

This thesis tells us that the topic of the paper is the gap between younger and older people, and the focus is the causes of this gap. We also know that the first part of the paper will discuss how individualism can create a difference between generations. To establish this connection between her thesis and the first section of the paper, the writer uses a topic sentence.

Topic Sentence 1: The value of independence is one reason why younger people and older people become isolated from each other.

→ Notice that the topic sentence repeats the focus idea, “reason,” and is connected to a supporting point in the thesis, but does not repeat the same words. That is, “the value of independence” in the topic sentence is another way to say “emphasis on individualism.” This topic sentence also includes a logical connection to the topic. In other words, “younger and older people become isolated from each other” is another way to express “generation gap.”

There are many ways to write a good topic sentence that expresses the ideas in the thesis statement without being repetitious. For this paper, equally good topic sentences for the first body paragraph would be:

Trying not to appear too dependent can cause older people to limit their interaction with their children.

Valuing their independent lifestyle causes adult children and their parents to lose contact with each other.

Looking back at the thesis statement again, we can see that a topic sentence for the second section of the paper, about the loss of focus on extended families, might be:

Topic Sentence 2: The change in family structure from extended families to nuclear families has resulted in less connection between generations.

For the third section of the paper, about overscheduled lifestyles, the topic sentence could be:

Topic Sentence 3: A third cause of the generation gap is the lack of time that family members have to spend with each other.

There are many other, equally good, ways of writing topic sentences 2 and 3, as long as the writer is careful to include a logical connection to all the parts of his/her thesis statement.