

Comprehension and Production of topics and main ideas

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- In this unit, you will ...



- Identify topics and main ideas.
- Identify strong and weak topic sentences,.
- Practice writing topic sentences.
- Combine sentences using and and but.
- Learn how to use commas in sentences with and and but.

- Read the following passage carefully:



Choosing a birthday present for a friend or family member is fun, but it can be difficult. The present should be personal and has to be thoughtful. For example, the best birthday present I ever got wasn't fancy or expansive. Last year my mother gave me a photograph of my father when he was my age. He is standing with his mother and father (my grandparents) in front of their house, and he looks happy. I think of my father every time I see that photo. It was a perfect birthday present.

Components of a good topic sentences



A good topic sentence should include either of the following:

❑ One clear topic

Ex:

- Weak: It's important to have friends, and do well in school.
- Strong: I don't think I will ever have a better friend than Heather.

❑ An opinion or idea about the topic



- Ex:
- Weak: I have been studying karate.
- Strong: Studying karate has given me strength and self – confidence.
- ✓ A good topic sentence should not be:
- ❖ too broad (too much to write about)
- Ex:
- Weak: Australia is an interesting country.
- Strong: On my visit to Australia, I saw many unusual animals.

❖ too narrow (not enough to write about/ is just a fact)



- Ex:
- Weak: School starts at 8:30 a.m. (Note: ante meridiem: L. before midday)
- Strong: Getting ready for school in the morning is more difficult than any of my classes.
- Note:
- The topic sentence is usually the first or last sentence, but it can be any sentence in the paragraph.

Exercise 3:

Circle the topic of the sentence. Underline the main idea:



❖ My sister is my best friend.

❖ My sister is my best friend.

❖ Snowboarding is my favorite winter sport.

❖ The last CD I bought changed my life.

❖ There are three reasons why my cell phone is useful.

Exercise 5: Circle the number of the best topic sentence and state one of the following reasons for why the other one is weak.

1. It is too broad.

2. It's too narrow.

3. There is no main idea or opinion.

4. There is more than one main idea.



- Studying English in high school helps you get a better job.
- We study English in high school.
- My grandfather has helped me in many ways.
- My grandfather is 86 years old.



- I really like sports.
 - Baseball has taught me many things about life.
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- There are many environmental problems around the world.
 - It's important to save the rainforests in South America.

Exercise 6: Circle the topic, Choose a main idea for the topic and write a topic sentences



- a. I have a photo of my sister .
- Idea: The photo reminds me of her.
 - Topic sentence: I carry a photo of my sister to remind me of her.
- b. I have a new jacket.
- idea: My new jacket is lost (stolen or ripped).
 - Topic sentence: Losing my new jacket is a very sad thing to remember.

Exercise 7: connect sentences through **and** and **but**.
and (similar ideas) , **but** (contrasting ideas)

- I sent my mother a birthday card , **and** I called her.
- I like getting flowers, **but** I don't like getting candy.
- I didn't send my brother a birthday present, **and** he didn't send me one.

Punctuation notes:



- When joining two complete sentences with **but**, you must always use a comma before **but**:
 - ❖ I didn't want to tell her the truth. I told her anyway.
 - ❖ I didn't want to tell her the truth, but I told her anyway.
- When joining two complete sentences with **and**, and the subjects of both sentences are written, use a comma before **and**.
 - ❖ Shopping at the mall is expensive, and parking is hard to find.

- When joining two complete sentences and remove the subject of the second sentence, don't use a comma before **and**:



- ❖ These days people mail paper cards. People e-mail electronic cards.
- ❖ These days people mail paper cards **and** e-mail electronic cards. Or
- ❖ These days people send **paper and electronic cards**.

Exercise 10: Join with and or but, use comma if needed:

- ❖ Presents are difficult to choose. Presents are fun to give.
- ❖ Presents are difficult to choose, but fun to give.

Homework: Do exercises 11, 12, 13, 15.



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
COOPERATION