**Topic Sentences**

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. Although the sentence may appear anywhere in the paragraph, it usually appears either first or last. Frequently, the topic sentence is the first sentence in the paragraph. No matter where you place the topic sentence, however, it is the topic sentence which determines what will be included in the paragraph and which shows how the paragraph connects to the thesis. The topic sentence is to the paragraph what the thesis statement is to the essay.

One way to compose topic sentences is to ask questions about the thesis statement. The most useful questions to ask are **why?** and **how?**.

**EXAMPLES**

Thesis Statement: *Everyone should have a room in which he can be alone.*

**Why** should everyone have such a room? Write the answers as they come to you. Your answers may be the topic sentences for your paragraphs. Here are some possibilities:

* Solitude is conducive to resolving personal problems.
* Most people study more efficiently in private than with others around.
* Occasionally, everyone needs to escape from the stress of being with others.

Thesis Statement: *Children should begin training for independence at an early age.*

**Why** should they?

Possible Topic Sentences:

* They learn how to handle money.
* They develop their own personalities instead of mirroring their parents’.

Thesis Statement: *Fishermen and hunters often destroy the natural resources that they rely on for their sport.*

**How** do they?

Possible Topic Sentences:

* Fishermen and hunters sometimes dispose of their garbage and tin cans in rivers and lakes.
* Through carelessness they cause forest fires.
* Irresponsible sportsmen try to outsmart the fish and game wardens in any way they can.

If your questions result in more topic sentences than you need for your essay, select those which support your thesis statement most effectively.