

What is a paragraph?

| What I know about it? | What I would like to know about it? | What I learned after the reading topic? |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
|                       |                                     |   |

Resource: García Ofelía (2009)

## What is a paragraph?

A paragraph is composed of a main idea, supporting sentences or reasons, and a concluding sentence that reinforces the central point. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), "a paragraph is a group of related sentences that discuss one (and usually only one) main idea" (p. 2). This main idea, often referred to as the topic sentence, introduces a controlling idea that guides the development of supporting sentences. These supporting sentences elaborate on the controlling idea. Additionally, the topic sentence and its controlling idea are often reiterated in the concluding sentence, tying the paragraph together. Oshima and Hogue (2006) also note that "a paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences" and should be "long enough to develop the main idea clearly" (p. 2). In essence, a well-structured paragraph connects several sentences that work together to support a specific point.

Speaking about indenting, (Oshima & Hogue, 2006) states that the first word should be a half inch from the left margin. Check the following video to keep in mind some basic information when writing a paragraph. [https://youtu.be/2\\_pZWdF7ujA](https://youtu.be/2_pZWdF7ujA) Additionally, I highly recommend to take notes from the following video <https://youtu.be/IMRTtUrSF0c>

## Parts of an academic paragraph

On an academic written paragraph there are three basic parts. The first one, the most relevant one, is the **topic sentence** or the **main idea**. Having only one topic to discuss, the writer limits their paragraph to one specific subject followed by a **controlling idea** or **narrowed idea**. The topic sentence embraces a general topic of discussion while the controlling idea presents the specific idea(s) to be developed in the whole paragraph.

Example:

Once upon a time, *there was a farm where many animals lived happily*. In the farm, there were oxen, horses, pigs, chickens, geese, ducks, goats, sheep, cows, guinea pigs and rabbits. All the animals lived in harmony, and all of them were friends with each other.

Source: (To the Moon and the Sun, 2023)

Here are some examples of topic sentences.

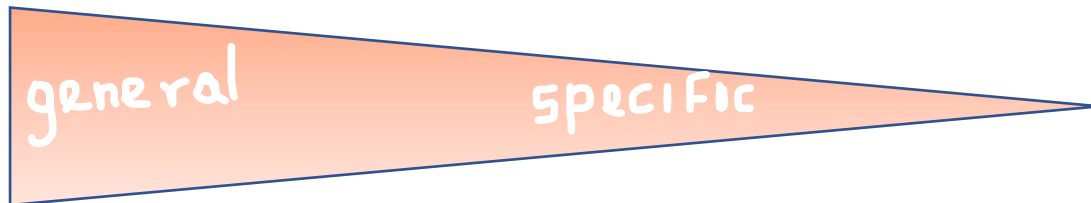
### Topic sentence

From **general idea** to **specific ones**

Example:

**Education college** includes **mathematics teaching major**.

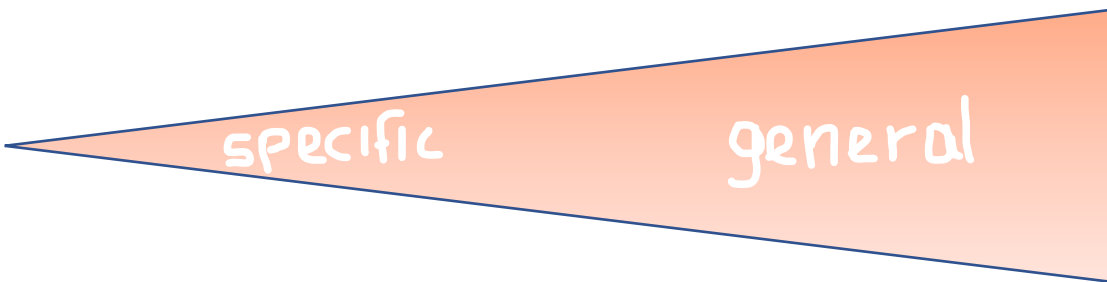
The controlling idea is **mathematics teaching major**. Therefore, the entire paragraph will discuss information about mathematics as a major in university studies.



### Topic sentence

From **specific** to **general**

There are **many language skills and sub-skills** needed to achieve a **Communicative competence on a target language**.



**Some strategies** invite a **customer to return**.

Controlling idea                      topic

there was a **farm** where many **animals lived happily**.

Topic                      Controlling idea

To achieve a **university degree** requires a **thesis writing and its defense**.

Topic                      Controlling idea

**Ecuador**, a tiny territory in South America, **is prized for two reasons internationally**.

Topic                      Controlling idea

Customers do not really buy services and products, they buy solutions and relationships.

What is the topic? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the controlling idea? \_\_\_\_\_

**Watch the following videos for a better understanding of what a topic sentence is. Take notes to enhance your knowledge.**

[https://youtu.be/o\\_8ZOTY3e9s](https://youtu.be/o_8ZOTY3e9s)

[https://youtu.be/odmjqrkDC\\_RY](https://youtu.be/odmjqrkDC_RY)

<https://youtu.be/xaovyYoPzvY>

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**Write your own topic sentences, 3 at least, after reading any article or any idea you might like.**

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**Work in pairs.**

Provide some feedback to a classmate's topic sentence. For example, analyse and comment about their topic, and controlling ideas. Additionally, you may comment if the topic sentence is too general or too specific.

**Solution:**

In the sentence “**Customers do not really buy services and products, they buy solutions and relationships,**”:

- **Topic sentence:** *Customers do not really buy services and products.*
- **Controlling idea:** *They buy solutions and relationships.*

The topic sentence introduces the main subject, which is the behavior of customers. The controlling idea narrows the focus by explaining what customers are truly seeking: solutions and relationships rather than the products or services themselves.