

Writing focus: Topic sentences

A good topic sentence should include either of the following:

- one clear topic
weak: *It's important to have friends, and also to 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
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)
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)
weak: *School starts at 8:30 a.m.*
strong: *Getting ready for school in the morning is more difficult than any of my classes.*

Remember: The topic sentence is *usually* the first or last sentence, but it can be any sentence in the paragraph.

3 Look at these topic sentences. Circle the topic of the sentence. Underline the main idea.

- This soccer ball was the gift I liked best.
- Shopping for gifts online takes a lot of time.
- The last CD I received changed my life.
- There are three reasons why I want a new laptop.
- Reading novels, such as the *Twilight* series, can help students improve their English.
- A present tells you a lot about the person who bought it.
- An amusement park was the perfect place to hold our graduation party.



4 Look again at the paragraph on page 13, *A Birthday Gift*. Which sentence is the topic sentence? Circle the topic and underline the main idea.