

What Is a Topic Sentence?

A topic sentence tells the reader what the whole paragraph is about.

The parts of a paragraph

Topic sentence	Sea otters are built for life in cold water.
Details that support it	Their fur is the thickest of any animal, so cold water never reaches their skin. They float on their backs to rest and even to eat. An otter may wrap itself in kelp so it does not drift away while it sleeps.
Conclusion	From nose to tail, a sea otter is made for the sea.

A topic sentence does two jobs

<u>Sea otters</u>	<u>are built for life in cold water.</u>
1. It names the topic.	2. It tells the main point about the topic.

Not too broad, not too narrow

Too broad

Animals are interesting.

It covers far more than the paragraph does.

Too narrow

Sea otters wrap themselves in kelp.

It is only one detail.

Just right

Sea otters are built for life in cold water.

Every detail in the paragraph fits under it.

Three ways to write one

Statement

Sea otters are built for life in cold water.

Say the main point plainly.

Number sentence

Three things help a sea otter live in cold water.

Tell how many details are coming.

Question and answer

How does a sea otter live in icy water? Its body is built for it.

Ask, then answer with the main point.

Where does it go?

The topic sentence usually comes **first**.

Sometimes a writer opens with a **hook** to grab the reader. Then the topic sentence comes right after the hook:

Brrr! Sea otters are built for life in cold water.

Watch out

Do not announce your topic. Just say your point.

✗ *I am going to tell you about sea otters.*

✗ *This paragraph is about sea otters.*

✓ **Sea otters are built for life in cold water.**