



The Thesis Statement & The Topic Sentence

Every Essay's Point

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Every essay has to have a point.

Otherwise, it's just a disorganized mass of random information.

The main reason you take the time to research, plan out, and write an essay of any sort should be because you have a point to make. If not, why waste your time?

An *essay* should have a specific main point as its focal point

just as

A *body paragraph* should have a supporting main point.

What's a Thesis?

Thesis Statement: a thesis statement is a one-sentence summary of a paper's main point. It presents the essay's subject and a main point about that subject.

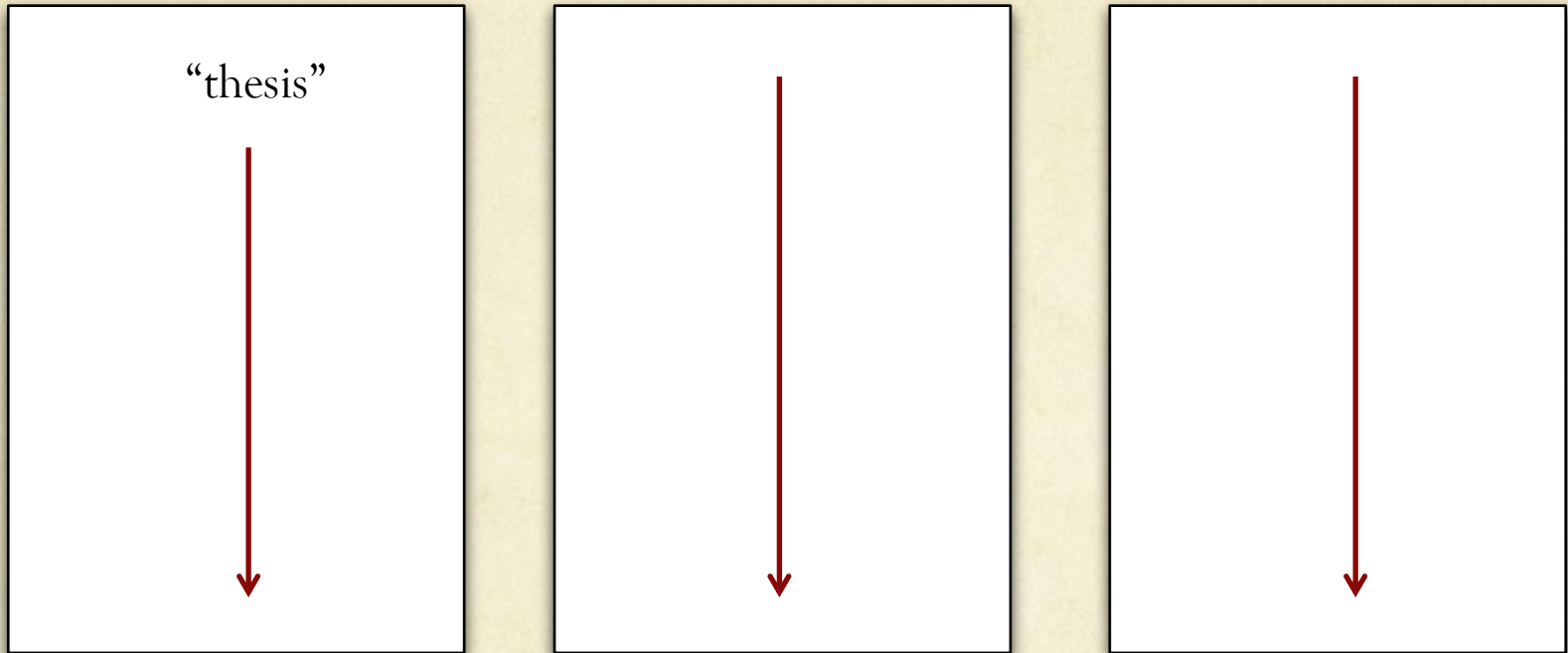
thesis = [subject] + [main point about the subject]

What's a Topic Sentence?

Topic Sentence: a topic sentence is a one-sentence summary of a paragraph's main point. It should directly relate to and support the essay's thesis.

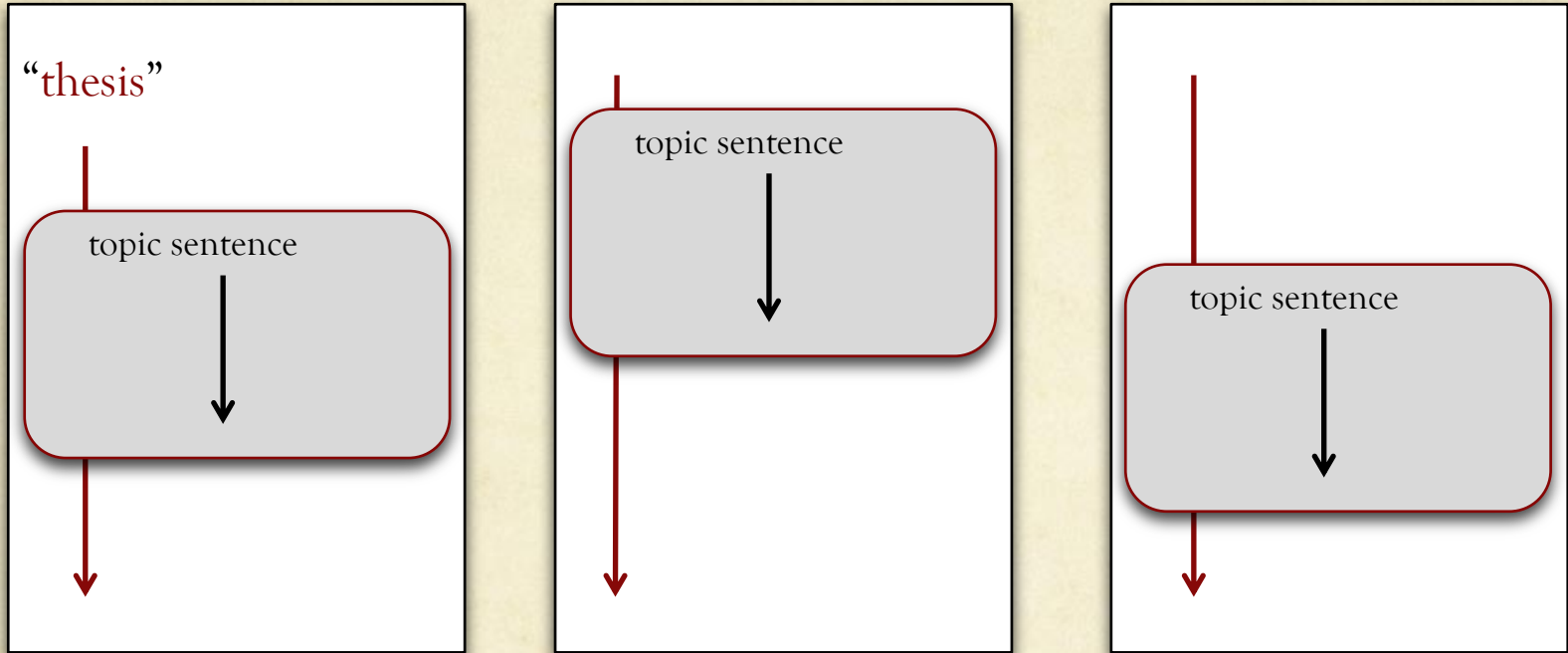
topic sentence = [subject] + [main point that supports the thesis]

- The **thesis statement** is the main point of your entire essay.



The scope of your thesis controls what kind of info you'll use in the body of your essay.

- The **topic sentence** is the main point of a body paragraph.



Essays are built by writing *body paragraphs* that relate to and support the thesis.

Make Sure Your Thesis Has an Appropriate Main Point

- The main point of a subject can be your opinion/belief about it, but it must provide relevant discussion.
- Make sure you're not providing a factual statement as a thesis. There isn't much room to discuss facts.

for example:

A) *Television has a lot of commercials.*

Sentence A is a fact, not a point for discussion. The fact that TV has commercials doesn't warrant further discussion. Your reader might think, "Yup, TV has commercials. So what? I've known that forever. What's your point?"

B) *Television has too many commercials with nothing but ads and slogans that try to empty our pockets and make us feel bad about how we look.*

Sentence B uses a main point to show readers why the author is writing this piece. It shows the author's opinion of commercials and makes a point about the fact that they are harmful. *This **main point** has room for discussion.*

Go From Broad to Narrow

College is expensive.



Broad, factual. Not much to discuss.

College is getting too expensive.



Better, but if college is getting too expensive, then what should be done about it?

The government should subsidize college or make loans easier to get for median-income Americans.

Tips for Writing Thesis Statements:

- make sure it's a complete sentence.
- consider the length of your essay to determine the scope of your thesis
- thesis statements for short essays are usually best expressed in only one sentence
- don't write "in my opinion" or "I feel that." The nature of the writing dictates that it is your opinion, not a fact
- start with a *working thesis*, a well-informed hunch about your subject/topic and a main point -- a working thesis allows more flexibility during the revision process
- avoid limiting yourself – don't write 3 supporting points into your thesis (5 paragraph essay)

Don't Make Your Essay a Grocery List

A thesis statement should not be a “list” of three specific reasons - it should be broad enough to cover your supporting points without specifically listing them.

Save the specific ideas for your topic sentences.

For example, look at this thesis statement:

The world of popular music has negative consequences on young listeners because of its overt materialistic values, its portrayal of extreme sexual behaviors, and its high esteem of the almighty dollar.

Rather than listing three supporting reasons in your thesis, save them for your topic sentences:

“...its overt materialistic values” could be the focus of your 1st topic sentence.

The *“embodiment of extreme sexual behaviors”* could be the focus of your 2nd.

And the *“high merits of the almighty dollar”* could be the focus of your 3rd.

If you've already listed all of your topic sentence ideas in your thesis, then it just sounds like you're repeating yourself in the body of your essay.

An effective revision of this thesis could be:

Listening to popular music has unhealthy social and moral consequences on young people due to the empty content of pop songs.

The phrases “*empty content*” and “*social and moral consequences*” represent all 3 ideas that will be used in the body of the essay in a more sophisticated and advanced fashion.

This allows for the supporting ideas to be then articulated in topic sentences without sounding needlessly repetitive.

So you should be trying to write this...

Listening to popular music has unhealthy social and moral consequences on young people due to the empty content of pop songs

...because it is more sophisticated than this...

The world of popular music has negative consequences on young listeners because of its overt materialistic values, its portrayal of extreme sexual behaviors, and its high esteem of the almighty dollar.

Now let's focus on Topic Sentences

- A thesis needs several supporting topic sentences to support its main point.
- In this class, each major body paragraph will begin with a topic sentence.
- Each topic sentence should directly relate to and support the thesis statement.

for example, if this were your thesis...

Television advertising has spiraled of control, inundating our lives with nothing but ads that try to empty our pockets and make us feel bad about how we look.

...these could be topic sentences:

An hour show is now just 44 minutes due to 16 minutes of advertising time, wasted time that should be spent on giving us more entertainment.

Advertising even permeates shows themselves through product placements, making us feel like our lives aren't "real" unless we spend money on products we don't need.

Most actors in these commercials don't look like the average person, making many Americans feel as if they have to look like the beautiful people in these ads just to fit in.

A Successful Essay is a *UNIFIED*
Essay.

Unity:

A paragraph is unified if all its sentences relate directly to its topic sentence.

An essay is unified if all its topic sentences relate directly to its thesis statement.

Don't be random!

Irrelevant information distracts the reader from your main point -- keep an essay's content *unified*.

When the content is focused, clear, and well-organized, the main point of the essay is easier to understand.

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