

I. Writing Topic Sentences

There are two parts to a good topic sentence:

- (a) the topic, or keywords
- (b) the controlling idea: words that show the content of the paragraph (supporting sentences)

1. Example topic sentences about background:

(a) Bob Dylan *has had* (b) a long and successful career with many critically acclaimed albums and awards.

- Here the controlling idea (b) includes words connected to the content of the paragraph—the supporting sentences: long and successful / highly evaluated albums, awards

- In this sentence, notice the present perfect verb (*has had*): He is still alive and still performing today.

(a) Buckminster Fuller *experienced* (b) many difficulties before he became a successful and world famous engineer.

- Here also the controlling idea (b) includes words connected to the content of the paragraph—the supporting sentences: difficulties / success and fame

- In this sentence, notice the simple past verb (*experienced*): He is no longer living.

2. Example topic sentence about for main section:

For content (keywords), your topic sentence here can use some words from the thesis statement.

Thesis Statement:

This essay will focus on two of Steve Job's most important innovations—the iPod and the iTunes Music Store—which have had a great impact on the music business.

Topic Sentence in Main Paragraph:

(a) Steve Jobs' iPod and iTunes Music Store—now Apple Music—(b) revolutionized the music business.

II. Using Time Phrases

Writing about history and careers requires you to show when events happened. See the table below.

Time	Phrases for showing time		
Year	In 1821	in 1914	The following year
Month, Year	In December of 1915	in January, 1902	A year later
Day, Month, Year	On May 1st, 2001	on 25 July 1991	The next day
Indefinite times	In the early / mid / late 19th century	in the early / mid / late 60s	
Period of time: decade / long event / century	In the 1970s	during the 1920s	throughout the decade (of the 50s)
	During the Civil War	over the next 5 years	In the following decade
Marking beginnings / ends	By the beginning / middle / end of the 1960s	after 1963	Until the 1850s