RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE
DIRECTED LEARNING ACTIVITY
Topic Sentences: Part II

STEP 1: Understand the following information about topic sentences. You don’t need to print this first page.

1. A topic sentence is the broadest or most general sentence in a paragraph. In the following list of jumbled sentences, the italicized sentence is the topic sentence because it is the most general.

   Paddleboats can be rented at the boathouse.
   Many miles of paths are reserved for joggers or bicyclists.
   *Fairmont Park offers many inexpensive outdoor activities for the citizens of Riverside.*
   Tennis players can use the lighted court without any charge.
   Children can run and play on all of the playground equipment.

2. Sometimes, we write a paragraph without a topic sentence, and we need to go back and create one. The following paragraph had the topic sentence added after the paragraph was written. Note that the topic sentence is broad but not too broad. If we had written: “Gardens are beautiful”, that would have been too broad. And if we had written “The flowers in my garden are like the morning sun”, that would have been too specific. It’s a balance.

   *My house garden is full of life in the mornings.* The morning glories are reaching toward the sun, and their petals are glowing with the first rays of light. Some parts of the garden haven’t been reached by the sun, and their shadows are deep and long. The birds are happily chirping; they can finally start looking for bugs to eat, and some of them swoop over the garden again and again, seemingly in delight. At the front of the garden, the rose bushes are covered in dew, and the oranges are still cold on the tree. By the end of the day, they will be dry and hot, but for now the entire garden is poised for the new day.

STEP 2: Now, print out the second page of this DLA, and do the topic sentence exercises.

***Remember, you can ask questions at any point in this process. Write down your questions as you go along, or go and ask an instructor each time you have a question. This is a self-paced activity, so make it work for you.***

STEP 3: Apply to your own writing: look over your own paragraphs in a writing assignment. Find one without a topic sentence or with a topic sentence that is too narrow or too broad. Write or rewrite that topic sentence to make it fit your paragraph. If you have questions about your own topic sentences, bring those assignments to a WRC instructor for part of your conference.
1. Circle the letter of the sentence in the following list that would best serve as a topic sentence. It should be the broadest or most general sentence the one that "covers" all of the other sentences. The other sentences should just be supporting details for that topic sentence.

   a. You have to feed the dogs twice a day and check their water bowls constantly.
   b. Dog-sitting can be a lot of work.
   c. Dogs want lots of love and attention, so you have to really play with them.
   d. If anything goes wrong, you have to be able to get the dogs to the vet.
   e. You can’t be gone from the house for too long, or the dogs might dig up the garden.

   a. Buying Top Ramen is cheap, but it’s not very nutritious.
   b. Eating out is a luxury that is often too expensive.
   c. Fast food is filled with fat and sugar, and it doesn’t have enough nutrients.
   d. Eating nutritiously on a student’s budget is a challenge.
   e. Making meals at home is difficult because not all students have full kitchens.

2. Now, write topic sentences for the following paragraph. Remember, it has to be broad enough to cover all the ideas in the paragraph but not too broad. Your topic sentence should name the topic of the paragraph and the author’s main idea about that topic.

   __________________________________________. When the semester started, I was trying as hard as I could to get straight A’s. I would rush from class to class and then right to the library. When an instructor stayed after class to talk to a few students, I rushed off to get my homework done. When some of the other students organized a study group in my physics class, I told them that I didn’t have time to get together. I was extremely stressed, and my first grades of the semester were everything but A’s. I even had failed a couple of assignments. Luckily, one of my best friends noticed what was wrong and told me to focus on what I was learning rather than the grades at the end of the semester. I started getting curious and staying after class and talking to other classmates about the material. I even resumed reading a book that wasn’t required, exactly all the activities that I thought I didn’t have time for. These acts made all the difference, and I ended up with a great report card.

3. Write down any questions you may have about topic sentences, and bring this sheet and any of your own topic sentences to the instructor on duty in the WRC to go over your answers and have this DLA signed.