A basic paragraph contains at least 5 sentences: a topic sentence, three sentences supporting the topic sentence, and a conclusion. As discussed in the previous exercise, the best way to get started is to make a list of the ideas related to the topic you are writing about. Then, turn those ideas into complete sentences.

Example of a topic sentence: *Michael Jordan is one of the greatest basketball players ever.*

Here is an example of a list of ideas supporting your topic sentence:

1. All star
2. Six championships
3. Clutch shooter
4. All NBA team
5. Respected by all other players
6. MVP
7. Scored a lot

Now here are some of the ideas turned into 3 supporting sentences:

1. *He has won six championships.*
2. *He is the most clutch shooter in NBA history*
3. *He made it to the all star game every single year he was in the NBA.*

These three supporting sentences literally “support” the topic sentence.

Exercise: For each topic sentence, write three supporting sentences.

Example:

Mulan was a very unique person. *(This is the topic sentence.)*

1. She was strong and independent during a time when women were supposed to be weak and dependent on men. (*Supporting sentence 1)*
2. Mulan was a warrior in the Chinese army at fine when it was strictly forbidden for women to join and fight in war. *(Supporting sentence 2)*
3. She defeated an entire army by herself—literally. *(Supporting sentence 3)*
4. Many interesting things happened in America during the 1960s.

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2. Certain historical figures rose up against injustice and oppression in their respective societies.

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3. There are many ways college is different from high school.

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4. Certain TV shows are great and iconic.

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5. There are some reasons that the Death Penalty is necessary/unnecessary.

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6. Many of Shakespeare’s stories are dark and tragic.

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7. Being rich has many advantages and benefits.

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8. Babe Ruth did many great things as a baseball player.

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9. There have been many incredible inventions over the years.

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10. Marvel studios has produced great movies and/or shows.

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Every paragraph contains a topic sentence. The topic sentence is the main idea of a paragraph; it is what the paragraph is talking about.

For this next exercise, your task is to provide an appropriate topic sentence for each set of supporting sentences below.

Example:

T.S.: The samurai was transported to a very strange world.

1. Strange creatures such as aliens and talking dogs inhabited the planet
2. The vehicles were all strange and futuristic.
3. There was no sign of human life anywhere.
4. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. The samurai realized that he had been transported into a future where an evil tyrant ruled the world.
6. He realized that he had thus failed a very important mission.
7. The consistent weirdness of the world also made him very uneasy.

 2. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He swore to escape from this strange world.
2. He vowed to go back in time and defeat the tyrant, who was known as Aku.
3. He promised to save his home in China.

 3. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He once helped a society of talking dogs repel an alien invasion.
2. He also traveled to a place full of death traps.
3. He even had an underwater adventure where he met humanoid creatures under the sea.

 4. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. One group of friends was the talking dogs.
2. Another friend was an arrogant, loudmouthed Scotsman who wielded a magic sword and had a machine gun for a leg.
3. Yet another interesting friend was a Neanderthal who lived with apes.

 5. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. One such enemy was a nefarious musical DJ who hypnotized innocent children through his music and forced them to do evil things.
2. Another foe was a ghost who had the power to resurrect dead ancient warriors and forced them to fight for him.
3. Other foes were three blind, humanoid archers who resembled walking armadillos and protected a mysterious and magical well.

 6. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He showed kindness and compassion to others.
2. He was always willing to sacrifice his own gain for the benefits of others.
3. He delighted in doing good to others.

 7. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He saved a herd of talking animals called Woolies from their evil and tyrannical captors.
2. He saved the lives of three men living under a curse.
3. He also saved a group of scientists from insect drones in outer space sent to capture and destroy them.

8. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. A superior warrior called the Guardian pummeled him and prevented him from going home.
2. The tyrant (also a wizard) greatly distressed him by constantly preventing him from going home.
3. The samurai was badly betrayed by a beautiful woman he fell in love with.

9. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Three warriors he saved ended up building a statue in his honor.
2. The children he saved from the evil DJ wrote a popular song in his name.
3. Various artists created pictures of him on objects such as vases and murals.

10. T.S: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. He finally returned home somehow.
2. He defeated the evil wizard when he returned.
3. He saved his home and China.

The conclusion is usually the last sentence of a basic paragraph. It concludes the paragraph, putting an end to it. The conclusion usually is an opinion about the topic; however, it cannot simply be a restatement of the topic.

Here is an example of a paragraph with a concluding sentence that doesn’t work:

**T.S: Basketball is a great sport.**

1. **It requires very little money or equipment.**
2. **It creates a certain sense of coolness and style.**
3. **It is very popular around the world.**

**C.S: This is what makes basketball so great.**

Here, the conclusion is really nothing more than a lazy restatement of the topic sentence. A better conclusion would be more than a restatement. It would sum up the writer’s feelings or opinions concerning the topic. Consider this alternative concluding sentence for the paragraph above:

**C.S.: This is why I love basketball more than any other sport.**

This conclusion is an opinion based on the topic sentence. It does not restate the topic sentence.

Exercise: Write an appropriate conclusion for each paragraph in the previous exercise.

So, let’s review the process of composing paragraphs:

* Know your topic.
* Make a list of ideas based on that topic.
* Write a topic sentence.
* Choose some of those ideas in the list and turn them into sentences. They will serve as your supporting details.
* Write a conclusion that forms your opinion about the topic.

By following these steps, you are officially ready to compose your first paragraph.

Exercise: Let’s do some more topic sentence practice. Turn the following questions into [possible] topic sentences. If you don’t know enough information about the questions, then you are free to do more research on the topic.

Example 1: What are some of the stories that relate to Sleepy Hollow?

 Possible Solution: There are many stories that surround the valley known as Sleepy Hollow. (Here, the question is talking about stories relating to Sleepy Hollow. I simply looked at whatever the question was talking about and wrote a sentence about that subject in such a way that at least three more sentences could be written to “support” or give more information about that sentence.)

Example 2: Who was King Arthur?

 Possible Solution: King Arthur was a great king who did many great things. (Here, again, the question is talking about stories relating to King Arthur. I simply looked at whatever the question was talking about and wrote a sentence about that subject in such a way that at least three more sentences could be written to “support” or give more information about that sentence.)

1. What were the Knights of the Round Table?

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 2. Who was Babe Ruth?

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3. What is the Commercial Revolution?

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4. Who was Abraham Lincoln?

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5. Who are the most influential people in the world today?

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6. What were the Negro Leagues?

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7. Who was Jackie Robinson?

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8. What are examples of healthy food?

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9. What were the Crusades?

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10. Who was Pocahontas?

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11. What was the Enlightenment?

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12. What was the difference between the Catholics and the Protestants?

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Bonus Exercise: Now, on a separate sheet of paper, choose three of the topics that interest you the most and turn each one into a basic paragraph.