The Topic Sentence – Different Methods for Writing a Topic Sentence

However Statements – Using a conjunctive adverb

*However* is one of several conjunctive adverbs that organize your ideas into a topic sentence. The first part will usually be the occasion; the second part will be the position. When the conjunctive adverbs are used in the middle of the sentence, a semicolon will precede the adverb and a comma will follow it.

- Use *; however*, in the middle of a sentence as a conjunctive adverb.
- A method to separate the occasion from the position.

Conjunctive adverbs share characteristics with two parts of speech. They are similar to standard adverbs because the meanings that they can convey, but they are also similar to coordinate conjunctions because they connect main clauses.

Conjunctive adverbs are unlike standard adverbs in one very important way. While the meaning implied by a standard adverb affects only a single word or phrase, the meaning implied by a conjunctive adverb concerns the entire clause of which it is a part.

Common Conjunctive Adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>accordingly</th>
<th>besides</th>
<th>in the meantime</th>
<th>perhaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>afterward</td>
<td>consequently</td>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td>so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>again</td>
<td>eventually</td>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td>subsequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
<td>furthermore</td>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td>therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
<td>in fact</td>
<td>otherwise</td>
<td>thus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new rules for the lunch room seemed unfair to the students; *however*, the rules have made the lunch room a better place to eat lunch.

The after school Scrabble© league was a place for boys to practice their spelling skills; *therefore*, the teachers suggested that all boys take part.

And, But, and Or Statements

When you use a coordinating conjunction, you create a compound sentence for your topic sentence.

- Use the coordinating conjunctions – *and, but, or, nor, so, yet,* and *for*
- Always place a comma before the conjunction.

Some people find it difficult to get an iPod to work, *but* most will succeed if they just remember to follow these simple guidelines.

A Few Good Prepositions

These words can jog your thinking and push you into a good topic sentence. Try using a prepositional phrase to introduce the topic sentence. Remember, not every preposition will work for every subject. Below is a partial list of prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According to</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Inside</th>
<th>Throughout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Along with</td>
<td>In addition to</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of</td>
<td>In case of</td>
<td>Near</td>
<td>Within</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to</td>
<td>In spite of</td>
<td>On</td>
<td>Without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despite</td>
<td>Instead of</td>
<td>Through</td>
<td>With the exception of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With determination and skill, the Basket Weavers won the Provincial championships.  

*During our vacation*, we met several interesting people from other countries.

**To, Plus a Verb [an Infinitive]**

Try using an infinitive to start your paper. An infinitive is the main verb preceded by the word *to*. Topic sentences with infinitives are clear and direct.

- **Infinitives**
  - To succeed
  - To accomplish
  - To win
  - To learn

To win at chess, players need to master three skills.

To attract new students, the school gave away an iPod to every enrolled student.

**The List Statements**

A common method for writing a topic sentence is to list the categories you will address. Do not mix words, phrases, and clauses [keep the list parallel]. Two of the ways you can accomplish this are a list of words, or a list of phrases.

Joe’s Café offers the best in service, food, and atmosphere.

The problems with the new school include: poor ventilation, small classrooms, inadequate lightning, and limited parking.

You can also use a list of dependent clauses, or a list of independent clauses.

*When I found my lost cricket, when I won the trip to Arva, and when I met a group of Scrabble® players from Russia*, I realized that life is great and full of surprises.

*Run for office; join a club; play in the band.* Activities like these might make high school more rewarding.

**Get Their Attention**

Write a topic sentence using a declarative sentence with a strong verb (action word).

The first settlers in Canada faced incredible challenges.

Ester’s foolproof holiday recipes saved me and impressed my family.

**A Rhetorical Question**

A rhetorical question is a question that is asked when we want to get someone’s attention, but we do not expect or want them to answer it.
What is your school doing to improve test scores? Our school has purchased several new reading comprehension programmes.

Can iPods be useful in the classroom? Our class is trying to use iPods in several ways to improve our concentration.

An Occasion / Position Statement
An occasion/position statement is a complex sentence with the dependent clause first. The dependent clause states the occasion for writing and the independent clause states the position of the writer. The occasion statement begins with words or phrases like:

In order that
If
After
Since
Before
So that
Whenever
As long as
As
Even though
Although
Unless
While
When
Even
As if
Whether
Until
Where
Though
Even if
Because

Although my family and I have taken many wonderful vacations, none was more fun and exciting than our camping trip to the Grand Canyon.

Power (Number) Statements
A power statement is a statement that shows that a list of information will follow. It includes a number word. It is used to organize your writing, and helps you focus on a specific number of points your paragraph, or essay, will address.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Number Words</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several</td>
<td>A few</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our classroom, we have several kinds of books on the ugly green bookshelf.

Avoiding "There are", "These are", and "Here are". Start Power Statements with a who, what, where, or when.

- **who** - **Mary and her sister Margaret** are my **two** best friends.
- **what** - **The word friendship** means a **number of** things.
- **where** - **At school** I have **several** good friends.
- **when** - **Last summer** my best friend Bob traveled to **various** unusual places.
**Side-by-Side Statements**
Use two simple sentences – one for the position and one for the occasion. This works best if you want the emphasis on the position you are taking.

It may be good to experience frustration. Too much frustration is extremely dangerous.

**Semicolon Topic Sentence**
This is like a side-by-side statement, but the main ideas are connected by a semicolon rather than a period or a conjunction.

Buying an iPod is exciting; it is also frustrating.

The Scrabble team deserved to lose the game; the players and coaches were fighting among themselves the entire game.

**Two Nouns and Two Commas**
This is a topic sentence that uses an appositive. It is a noun followed by a description that tells more about the noun. It helps put more information in a topic sentence.

Northridge, *a large school in the north section of London*, made the national news today.

**Using a Quotation**
Using a quotation in the topic sentence is an easy yet powerful way to start your paper.

When Mark Twain said, *"Wrinkles should indicate where the smiles have been,"* it really reminded me of my grandmother.

The best advice that anyone gave me was, *"Life is too short, live it well."*

**Compare/Contrast Words for a Topic Sentence**
Writing a topic sentence using one of these compare/contrast words or phrase makes this kind of paragraph writing easy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare/Contrast Words or Phrases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>similarities</td>
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<tr>
<td>similarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>compare</td>
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<tr>
<td>contrast</td>
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<td>alike</td>
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<tr>
<td>like</td>
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<tr>
<td>in common</td>
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<td>vary</td>
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<td>opposite</td>
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<tr>
<td>differ</td>
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<tr>
<td>different</td>
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<tr>
<td>varied</td>
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<tr>
<td>resemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>variations</td>
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<tr>
<td>twins</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

My English teacher and my mathematics teacher encourage their students in entirely *different* ways.

Tennyson’s “The Eagle” and Wadsworth’s “To a Butterfly” have three *similarities*. 
**Where or When + What’s Happening**

When an idea for a topic sentence is hard to find, try this simple approach. Focus on a “where” or a “when” and then add a “what’s happening.” *What’s Happening* means what could happen, what did happen, what might happen, what should happen. Choose a serious topic or a lighter one.

| In some parts of the country, students conserve energy in creative and interesting ways. |
| In the story *Zombie Butts from Uranus* by Andy Griffiths, the reader is given information about the hero in creative and interesting ways. |