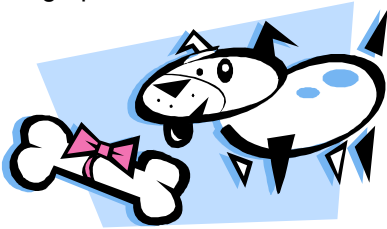


TOPIC SENTENCES AND CONTROLLING IDEAS

When writing a paragraph, the writer should begin by creating a **topic sentence** that states a **controlling idea**. The topic sentence helps the writer to focus on what she/he needs to include in the paragraph and what should be left out of the paragraph.

Each paragraph should cover one topic. The **controlling idea** tells the reader what the paragraph will be about.



Example: ***My dog is loyal, funny, and beautiful.***

The rest of the paragraph, then, should demonstrate the dog's qualities of loyalty, humor, and beauty to the reader.

◇ **Demonstrate**

Demonstrate the dog's qualities of loyalty to the reader.

The dog's loyalty may be described in details about how brave the dog is compared to other dogs or how loudly the dog barks to frighten away the mailman.

◇ **Illustrate**

Illustrate the dog's ability to be funny to allow the reader to learn something about the dog's personality; details help the reader to know the dog in a particular context.

The dog's ability to be funny may be illustrated by relating information about how the dog performs a certain trick or plays with a particular toy.

◇ **Describe**

To describe the dog's beauty, the writer might include details about the dog's appearance, such as the color of its eyes, the shade of its fur, and whether its ears stand up or flop over.

In the end, a well-written paragraph should convey its **controlling idea** by using details to demonstrate, illustrate, and/or describe the subject. **Details** help the reader to **imagine** and **visualize** the subject vividly (whether it be a dog, a building, or even a specific experience).

Reynolds, Ed and Marcia Huntington. *Confidence in Writing*. 4th Ed. Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 2002.