

Choosing the Best Topic

Exercises 1

A. Make a check after the best topic. Write "too specific" or "too general" after the other topics.

On American television, there are many ads about kinds of soap. They show soaps for washing clothes. they also show soap specially for washing dishes. Some ads show soap only for washing floors. Other ads are about soap for washing cars. Television ads show soap for washing poeple too. Often the ads tell about special soap for washing your hair. Other soap is just for taking care of little babies. American television seems very interested in cleaning!

- a. Soap in the United States _____
- b. Soap for wasing in the house. _____
- c. Ads for soap on American TV _____

The evening news on television is very popular with many Americans. They like to find out what is happening in the world. On television they can see real people and places. They believe it is easier than reading the newspaper. Many poeple think television makes the news seems more real. They also think the news on television is more interesting. The television news reporters sometimes tell funny stories and even jokes. This makes the news about wars and crime seem less terrible.

- a. Why news programs have funny stories _____
- b. Why Americans like television news _____
- c. What is happening in the world _____

In the United States there are two kinds of television stations. One kind is commercial. About 841 of the television stations in the United States are commercial stations. These stations are businesses. They show ads for make money; the other kind of television station is public. These stations do not show any ads. They get some money from the government. They also get money from the people who watch public stations.

- a. The two kinds of television stations in the U.S. _____
- b. Public television stations _____
- c. Television in the U.S. _____

B. Write the topic for all three paragraphs. _____

Exercise 2. Write the topic of each paragraph.

It is easy to make a good cup of tea. Just follow these steps. First, boil some water. Next put some hot water in the tea pot to warm it. Pour the water out of the pot and put in some tea leaves. You will need one teaspoon of tea leaves for each cup of tea you want. Then pour the boiling water into the tea pot. Cover the pot and wait for a few minutes. Now the tea is ready to drink.

Topic : _____

The first people to grow coffee beans lived in the Middle East. The Persians, Arabs and Turks were drinking coffee many hundreds of years ago. Then, in the 1600s, Europeans learned about coffee. They quickly learned to like it. Soon there were coffee houses in many European cities. Europeans took coffee with them when they travelled to new countries. That is how people in other parts of the world learned about coffee. Now coffee is very popular in North and South America, in Africa and in parts of Asia.

Topic : _____

In the United States orange juice is one of the most popular cold drinks. Most of the oranges for juice grow in Florida. In many homes around the country, orange juice is always served at breakfast time. It is also a favourite snack at any time of the day. When there is bad weather in Florida, the whole country knows about it. Bad weather in Florida means fewer oranges. And that means more expensive orange juice.

Topic: _____

Now, your turn to write the topic for all three paragraphs. _____

Thinking of the Topic

Finding a job is often difficult for a young person today. But it will be easier if you follow these steps. First, you have to decide what kind of job you want. Think about what kind of work you like to do. You should talk to your friends and your family about it. You can also talk to some people with different kinds of jobs. Next you need to write a resume. This tells about your education and your earlier jobs. It should be carefully typed. Then you are ready to start looking for a job.

Topic: _____

The job of a young doctor is not easy. Doctors often spend many hours with a patient. There are usually more patients waiting. So doctors do not have much free time during the day. They often have to work all night in hospital too. Or they may have to go somewhere suddenly when someone is ill. A doctor's decision may mean life or death for the patient. Even when doctors are tired, they have to think very carefully.

Topic: _____

The worse problem may be over when you find a good job. But you must think about keeping your job. You may lose it if you are not careful. Be sure you arrive at work on time every morning. You should not stop every hour for coffee. And you should not leave early too often. An important part of your job may be the way you work with other people. If you are difficult to work with, you may have trouble. Or you may have trouble if do not make friends with the people at your job. Remember these things if you want to keep your job!

Topic: _____

Write the topic for all three paragraphs: _____

Main Ideas

Read each paragraph. What is the topic? And what is the main idea?

Before the 1600s people were interested in chemicals. But they did not study them like modern chemists. These early chemists were called alchemists. Their kind of chemistry was called alchemy. They had some strange ideas. For example, they believed they could make gold. They thought they could mix together the right things and have golds. For hundreds of years alchemists tried to do this. Of course, no one ever made gold this way.

Topic:

Main idea:

Antoine Lavoisier is important in the history of modern chemistry. In the 1700s, he began to use a new way to study chemicals. Before Lavoisier, scientists just looked at something and thought about it. But Lavoisier did experiments. He studied the size and weight of many different things. He found out something important. He found out that nothing really goes that way. It changes into something else. For example, when water boils, it becomes steam. This was a very important idea for the future of chemistry.

Topic:

Main Idea:

Lavoisier is best known as a chemist. He learned some very important facts about chemistry. And he gave names to many chemicals. These are the same names we use today. Some of Lavoisier's other ideas were important, too. He used science to improve farming. He also worked on a way to improve France's banks and government. He helped to make the taxes and money the same all over France. Lavoisier was a great man in many ways.

Topic:

Main Idea:

Cats and dogs are both popular pets. But cats are nicer pets in some ways. Cats are cleaner, **first of all**. They stay very clean and do not make the house dirty. Cats are **also** quieter than dogs. They usually do not make a lot of noise. Cats are safer, **too**. Dogs sometimes bite people, but cats almost never do. **And finally**, cats are easier to take care of. You do not have to spend much time with a cat. In fact, many cats prefer to be alone.

Topic:

Main idea: Cats are nicer than dog in some ways

Many children want to have a pet. But parents do not like the idea of a dog or a cat in the house. In fact, pets can be good for children. A pet means something to play with. This can be especially important if there is only one child. Also, children can learn a lot from a pet. They can learn about animals and the natural world. Children also learn about taking care of something. They cannot forget about their pet. This is an important lesson for all children.

Topic:

Main Idea:

Most Americans think of cats as pets. But not all cats are pets. Some cats help people and others are problem. For example, on farms and old houses cats can help. They kill small animals such as rats or mice. But sometimes, people do not want cats around. Some people like watch birds in their yards. Cats may kill the birds or scare them away. Cats are also a problem in cities. In Rome, for example, thousands of cats live the streets and old buildings. They make a lot of noise, and they are dirty and dangerous.

Topic:

Main Idea:

“Black Thursday” is a day many American will nver forget. It was October 24, 1929, the beginning of the Great Depression. Before that day, business in America was growing fast. Between 1914 and 1929, it grew about 62%. But on “Black Thursday” everything changed. On that day, American business suddenly stopped growing. In fact, many businesses stopped completely. The next few years of American history are called the Great Depression. These were terrible years for business and for the people. Five thousand banks and 85,000 businesses failed. Many people lost all their money. About 12 million Americans lost their jobs.

Topic:

Main Idea:

The Great Depression of the early 1930s surprised many people. They did not think American business could have such terrible problems. For a long time, they did not believe the problems were serious. Many businessmen hoped for better times soon. Even President Hoover did not think the Depression was serious. He told Americans in 1930 that the problems were already going away. But this was not true. Millions of Americans did not have jobs. Many of these people did not have homes or food. Life was hard for many Americans. And it did not get easier for many years.

Topic:

Main Idea:

The Great Depression finally ended for several reasons. One reason was a new government with new ideas. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt became President of the United States. He made many changes in the laws to help people. New laws helped American banks and businesses. Other laws gave people jobs and housing. But Roosevelt’s government was only one reason for the 1930s, the United States began to get ready for the war. New factories were built for war planes and ships. That meant more jobs. These jobs gave many people a chance to change their lives.

Topic

Main Idea:

Comparison

Compare an apple and an orange

How are they alike?

Both are kinds of fruit

Both are round

Both have skins

Both taste good

How are they different?

They are different colors

They taste different

Oranges grow in warm places. Apples grow in cool places

Sometimes oranges do not have seeds. Apples always have seeds

Compare the U.S and Canada:

How are they both alike?

Both are in in North America

Both have many people from around the world

.....

.....

.....

.....

How are they different?

Canada has two official languages, but U.S has
 The United States has more people than Canada

.....

Some comparison signal words: likeness: alike, similar, same, also,
 Difference: different, unlike, more than, less than, however, but,..

Examples:

Lemons and limes are very similar kinds of fruits. They are grown in warm places. They both have hard skins and soft insides. People do not usually eat whole lemons and limes. That is because both of these fruits have a very sour taste. They are often used in cooking dessert and main dishes. People make juice from lemons and also from limes. Finally, both fruits have a lot of vitamin C in them.

What is this paragraph comparing?

Likenesses	signals
Grown in warm countries Hard skins and soft insides	Both Both

Lemons and limes are both citrus fruits, but they are quite different. First of all , the color is different. Lemons are yellow. Limes are green. The taste is different, too. Also, lemons are grown all over the world. But limes are grown in only a few places. This is because lemons are an old kind of fruit. But limes are new. They are really a special kind of lemon. Scientists made them from lemons only about 50 years ago.

What is this paragraph comparing?

differences	signals
Colors Taste Where they.....	Different Different But

Exercise 1

Peter and Joe are roommates in Chicago. They both like to cook good meals and have dinner parties. But they have very different ideas about what to cook. Peter likes to cook lots of simple food. His favorite foods are steak, potatoes, and apple pie. But Joe prefers special dishes from far-away places. He likes to cook curries from India and sushi from Japan. Dinner at Peter and Joe's apartment is always delicious. What is the paragraph comparing?

Differences	Likenesses

Poland and Italy may seem like very different countries. And of course, they are different in some ways. Poland is in the north of Europe, but Italy is in the south. Poland has a communist government, but Italy has democratic government. However, there are also similarities. In both countries, the most important is Catholicism. In both Italy and Poland, history is very important to the people. And finally, both the Italians and the Polish are famous for their friendliness and good spirit.

What is this paragraph comparing?

Differences	Likenesses

Exercise 2

The food in India is similar to the food in China. First of all, in both countries, rice is a very important food. It is served at almost every meal in India and China. Indian and Chinese cooking can be very spicy. And they are also alike because they both use many different vegetables. In both countries, the meat dish is not always the most important dish. Finally, these are both very large countries with long histories. So both include many different kinds of cooking. In India and China, each part of the country has its own favorite kinds of food and way of cooking.

What is this paragraph comparing?

Likenesses:

People used to have very different ways of eating in Europe. Now everyone uses forks, knives, and spoons. But a thousand years ago, no one used forks at the table. They used only spoons and knives. Today most Europeans do not eat with their fingers. But back then many people picked up their food in their hands. In those days most people did not use glasses for drinking. Instead they drank from bowls or large wooden cups.

What is this paragraph comparing?

Differences:

In some ways English breakfasts are very similar to American breakfasts. In both countries people usually eat large breakfast. English and American breakfasts both include several dishes. They may include some fruits juice, cereal, and then eggs and toast. In both places, there may also be some meat with the breakfast. However, there are also some differences between American and English breakfasts. In England, people usually drink tea in the morning. However, most Americans prefers coffee. The English usually do not eat sweet things for breakfast, but many Americans like sweet bread or coffee cake.

What is this paragraph comparing?

Differences	Likenesses