

Lists in Topic Sentences

A common method for writing a topic sentence is to list the key/star ideas that will appear in the paragraph or essay.

Here are suggestions for how to list key/star ideas:

- A list of words
- A list of phrases
- A list of dependent clauses
- A list of independent clauses

This type of topic sentence works best in an essay or report. It introduces too much information for a single, standalone paragraph.

Keep the list parallel—do not mix words, phrases, and clauses. In other words, if the first item of the list is a word, all items in the list are a word.

Examples

A List of Words

- The new computers offer convenience, speed, and interconnectivity.
- The work of a brain surgeon requires **intelligence, experience, skill, and decisiveness.**

A List of Phrases

- Problems with the state's highways include **insufficient signage, poorly maintained surfaces, and aging bridges.**
- Migrants on the Oregon Trail had to travel **across the prairies, over the Rocky Mountains, and through dry lands** to reach their destination.

A List of Clauses

- **Winning attention as a young politician, demonstrating toughness as a Dakota cattleman, facing gunfire as a soldier in the Spanish-American War**—Theodore Roosevelt believed each of these experiences helped prepare him for the presidency.
- **If the price is low enough, if the quality is good enough, and if the customer service is prompt enough,** her new business will succeed.