Practice 1: Supporting Details for Topic Sentences

Each topic sentence below is followed by a list of details that could be used to support it. Label each detail as

- **Illustration / Example:** Use specific details to SHOW a concept or idea.
- **Fact:** Use facts to answer questions such as *what, when, where, or how* for a topic sentence.
- **Statistics:** Provide specific data from research to support and develop topic sentences.
- **Expert Testimony:** Credible sources can provide an educated opinion to develop your ideas.
- **Description:** If you need to help a reader visualize the topic, use descriptive details to help the reader visualize the person, object, or event being described.

1. Individual behaviors significantly influence a person’s risk for chronic disease.

   ____________ Physical inactivity and overweight / obesity are each responsible for nearly 1 in 10 deaths in US adults.

   ____________ Dietary risks such as high salt, low omega-3 fatty acids, and high trans fatty acids have a significant effect on mortality.

   ____________ Excessive alcohol consumption increases risk through cardiovascular disease, other medical conditions, traffic accidents, and violence.

   ____________ According to the CDC, people who smoked for more than 10 years face a much greater risk of developing emphysema and other diseases.

2. The family, the media, and the schools all serve as important influences on a person’s political beliefs.

   ____________ Recent research from Harvard University has demonstrated that one of the reasons for the long-lasting impact of parental influence on political attitudes is simply genetics.

   ____________ Eight years after researchers first interviewed a sample of high school seniors and their parents, they still found more agreement than disagreement between parents and children.

   ____________ Jeremi Harrison, who only used one source for his news, consistently voted for one political party in all five of the elections that he voted.
The median age of viewers of CBS, ABC, and NBC news programs in 2018 was 61–19 years older than the audience for atypical prime-time program.

3. The number of things plants do for humans is enormous.

   Up to 90 percent of the calories humans consume comes directly from plants.

   Humans use plants for lumber, medicines, fabrics, fragrances, and dyes.

   Plants are able to provide us with food because they make their own food through photosynthesis.

   Plants also produce much of the oxygen that animals, insects, and people require.

**Part II: As you read the following essay, note how the writer develops the topic sentence for each paragraph with specific details.**

**To Connect or Not to Connect**

According to the Washington Post, in 2017 the average American teenager spent about seven and a half hours consuming media, whether it was by watching television or accessing media on a computer or cell phone. Greater than 75% of today’s teenagers own a cell phone and most of those seven and a half hours are spent on this one device (Ahuja). The millennial generation is even referred to as the Facebook generation, becoming the first generation to be tied to the technology of their time. As teens are spending increasing amounts of time in front of a screen, some may find their health and relationships suffer; however, the Internet and cell phones also beneficially connect users of all ages to news sources, online banking and GPS technology and even emergency alerts from local police.

Think About: The last sentence of this introduction paragraph is a thesis--it identifies the topic and what the writer will say about the topic.

Where it was the norm for the Baby Boomers to sit down to dinner with their parents every night for dinner, families now eat only one or two meals together a week, and even then it is not uncommon for cell phones to also be present at the dinner table. Dedicating spending time to family and friends now seems to be a foreign concept as they have to compete for attention with the Internet and social media. In a Washington Post article, Zarin Rahman, a 19 year old college student, chronicled her use of devices for two months. Rahman writes that when she limited her screen time to less than two hours a day, she was “a better student, more productive, and happier.” For one month, Rahman limited her Internet time and found that “she ate lunch and dinner with others twice as often and felt happier, more connected to people.” In the month when
she didn’t limit her time, Rahman only ate “a meal 10 times with others and definitely did feel more isolated and empty.”

**Think About:** The writer uses a clear and detailed example to illustrate and support the topic sentence and explain how technology can affect relationships.

The negative effects of screen time are not limited to the social world; there are also a number of health and psychological risks associated with too much screen time. Although more loosely connected, too much screen time can result in cyberbullying and have negative effects on socialization. Furthermore, some children suffer from sleep deprivation because they are online surfing the Web late at night when they should be sleeping. A study by Stanford University, found that children in 2017 averaged an hour less of sleep per night compared to children in 2007. Additionally, pediatricians across the country are encouraging parents to limit their children’s screen time to less than two hours each day and to keep laptops, TVs, and cell phones out of the bedrooms so that children sleep more (CBS). These are all important effects that have developed since the explosion of technology over the last fifteen years.

**Think About:** Note how the paragraph uses expert testimony to support the idea that too much screen time has negative effects on health. Stanford university is a well-known and respected university.

Although there are serious risks to the overuse and abuse of being connected, technology is also a major part of today’s culture; therefore; it would be a catastrophic change to move away from it completely. For the average college student, being connected is a vital part of his or her life. Aside from the obvious reasons, such as doing research through online databases and submitting homework through online portals, college students use being connected to receive emergency alerts from campus police and information about severe weather in the area. In addition to emergency information, college students use their phones and the Internet to break out of the bubble that ties them to their little world on campus.

The benefits of being connected are not limited to college students.

**Think About:** Note the strong topic sentence here that establishes the topic and explains what this paragraph will say about the topic.

GPS is becoming increasingly important in ground and air travel. The ease of knowing where to go and how to get there has made an easy task out of navigating a trip. GPS also makes it possible to locate positions of lost or crashed vehicles or even to find stolen goods. In addition to GPS, online banking has revolutionized the way that many people take care of their banking needs. With just the click of a button into a secure server, users can transfer money and pay bills. According to Stanford University’s Research Center, 81% of Americans who managed household finances did so through an online banking system at least once in the past twelve months.
Think About: The writer uses specific details to support the topic sentence with examples and statistics.

There seems to be no regression of technology now that it has become a way of life for so many people. One can only hope that by understanding both the benefits and the drawbacks, users of technology will be able to find a happy medium. Since technology is necessary for many people, people can not simply choose to avoid technology; they must learn to live with it so that technology improves their life.

Part II:

1. **Paraphrase** the thesis for the essay by using your own words. Be careful to use your own words to explain the ideas for the essay.

2. Identify specific 2 specific supporting details the writer uses to support her ideas.

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3. Academic writing will require you to develop longer, detailed essays. How could the writer expand her essay by developing one of her topic sentences by using supporting details?

   **Topic Sentence to Expand:**

   Example of supporting details: (Feel free to make up experts, statistics, or facts for your support since you don’t have access to a library to research).

Part III: Review the techniques and examples to support and develop your ideas with specific details. Then complete Practice 3.

   - Add names, numbers, times, and places

**VAGUE:** Many Americans go online to do their banking.
MORE SPECIFIC: According to Stanford University’s Research Center, 81% of Americans who managed household finances did so through an online banking system at least once in the past twelve months.

- Add more facts and explanation.

VAGUE: GPS lets you do a lot.
MORE SPECIFIC: GPS also makes it possible to locate positions of lost or crashed vehicles or even find stolen goods.

- Use examples

VAGUE: I rely on the internet for school.
MORE SPECIFIC: As a college student I use the internet to do research through online databases and to submit homework through online portals.

Practice 3: Practice adding specific supporting details to a paragraph by revising your own writing. Look at the sample revisions to a paragraph below.

Original Paragraph:
Technology has made the idea of family time into a foreign concept. Everyone is competing for attention. Screen time detracts from quality time with parents and from school. It is too easy to spend hours on social media, whether on your phone or your computer. Obviously, there are many positive aspects of technology, but teenagers have to be careful about how they use technology.

Notice that the paragraph is very general. It does not describe specific negative aspects of technology, nor does it explain how screen time detracts from time with family or friends. Notice the addition of details and examples that clarify and develop a stronger topic sentence in the revised paragraph.

REVISED PARAGRAPH:
Where it was the norm for the Baby Boomers to sit down to dinner with their parents every night for dinner, families now eat only one or two meals together a week, and even then it is not uncommon for cell phones to also be present at the dinner table. Dedicating spending time to family and friends now seems to be a foreign concept as they have to compete for attention with the Internet and social media. In a Washington Post article, Zarin Rahman, a 19 year old college student, chronicled her use of devices for two months. Rahman writes that when she limited her screen time to less than two hours a day, she was “a better student, more productive, and happier.” For one month, Rahman limited her Internet time and found that “she ate lunch and dinner with others twice as often and felt happier, more connected to people.”
the month when she didn’t limit her time, Rahman only ate “a meal 10 times with others and definitely did feel more isolated and empty.”

Choose ONE of the following topics. Then, develop a topic sentence that expresses a main idea about the topic and write 3-4 sentences to support that topic sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>● Your favorite book or movie</th>
<th>● A sport (or hobby) you would like to take up</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● How to end a relationship</td>
<td>● A childhood memory</td>
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Review the techniques to clarify and develop your ideas. Then, revise your paragraph by adding specific details.