Topic Sentences

An effective topic sentence acts like a compass, showing the reader where your argument intends to go. Writing a good topic sentence can help the reader to understand, but it can also help the writer to organize. All supporting and concluding sentences must link back to the topic sentence to generate cohesion and clarity.

Directions: In the following exercise, you'll see three topic sentences for three different paragraphs. Each is followed by sentences that are supposed to support the topic sentences. Determine whether the following paragraphs are unified. Strike through any of the supporting sentences (A-F) that don't clearly relate to and build on the topic sentences.

Topic Sentence 1: In *The Empire Strikes Back*, Luke attains enlightenment.

A. Succumbing to the dark side, Darth Vader never learns about goodness and the force.
B. During his adventure, Luke acquires the wisdom that he needs to become a Jedi.
C. While battling evil, Luke learns a lot about himself and his destiny.
D. George Lucas, the director of the *Star Wars* saga, is a brilliant and innovative director.
E. His skill with the light saber, his ability to fly, and his belief in himself reveal that Luke is a wise figure.
F. C3PO and R2D2 are very intelligent companions of Luke Skywalker, and they add comic relief to the *Star Wars* saga.

Topic Sentence 2: In order to write a unified body paragraph, a writer should revise for the following:

A. Make sure the topic sentence previews or summarizes the paragraph's main idea.
B. Save your work often so that you don't lose important sentences you've written.
C. Create an interesting thesis and compelling title so that the reader is eager to read the paper.
D. Incorporate examples in the body of the paragraph, making sure that the examples relate to, and build upon, the topic sentence.
E. Develop the body paragraph by explaining the significance of those examples, especially focusing on the ways in which the examples support the topic sentence claims.
F. Create a paragraph conclusion that summarizes the paragraph's main idea and transitions to the next body paragraph.

Topic Sentence 3: Ted Williams is probably the greatest hitter of all time.

A. Williams, also known as "The Splendid Splinter," was a tremendous power hitter, belting over 500 home runs in his career.
B. In addition to power, Williams hit for average, garnering the fourth highest career batting average in Major League Baseball history.
C. Also known as "The Splendid Splinter," Williams is the last man to hit .400, batting an amazing .406 in 1941.
D. Ted Williams was also a manager of the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers, but he didn't excel in that capacity.
E. Having lost three years of his prime to service in World War II and two more years as a fighter pilot in the Korean War, Ted Williams' hitting statistics are even more spectacular than they appear since he would have achieved more had he served five years of his career to the military.
F. Some say Babe Ruth is even better than Ted Williams since "The Babe" was an all-time great hitter and pitcher while "The Splendid Splinter" never pitched.