

2 Giving and Receiving Presents

In this unit, you will ...

- identify topics and main ideas.
- identify strong and weak topic sentences.
- practise writing topic sentences.
- combine sentences using *and* and *but*.
- learn how to use commas in sentences with *and* and *but*.

1 Tell a partner about the last present you received.

- Who gave you the present?
- When did they give you the present?
- What was the present? Did you like it?

2 Read the paragraph and answer the questions.

- a. What is the topic of the paragraph?
 1. celebrating birthdays
 2. the writer's family
 3. choosing presents
- b. What is the writer's most important opinion about the topic?
 1. Presents should be old.
 2. Presents should be chosen carefully.
 3. A photograph is a good birthday present.
- c. Why does the writer like the photograph?
 1. It helps him think about his father.
 2. It wasn't expensive.
 3. It was a birthday present.



A Birthday Present

¹ Choosing a birthday present for a friend or family member is fun, but it can be difficult. ² The present should be personal and has to be thoughtful. ³ For example, the best birthday present I ever got wasn't fancy or expensive. ⁴ Last year my mother gave me a photograph of my father when he was my age. ⁵ He is standing with his mother and father (my grandparents) in front of their house, and he looks happy. ⁶ I think of my father every time I see that photo. ⁷ It was a perfect birthday present.

Writing focus: Topic sentences

A good topic sentence should include either of the following:

- one clear topic
weak: *It's important to have friends, and also to do well in school.*
strong: *I don't think I will ever have a better friend than Heather.*
- an opinion or idea about the topic
weak: *I have been studying karate.*
strong: *Studying karate has given me strength and self-confidence.*

A good topic sentence should **not** be:

- too *broad* (too much to write about)
weak: *Australia is an interesting country.*
strong: *On my visit to Australia, I saw many unusual animals.*
- too *narrow* (not enough to write about / is just a fact)
weak: *School starts at 8.30 a.m.*
strong: *Getting ready for school in the morning is more difficult than any of my classes.*

Remember

The topic sentence is usually the first or last sentence, but it can be any sentence in the paragraph.

3 Look at these topic sentences. Circle the topic of the sentence. Underline the main idea.

- My sister is my best friend.
- Snowboarding is my favourite winter sport.
- The last CD I bought changed my life.
- There are three reasons why my mobile phone is useful.
- Reading books, such as the Harry Potter stories, can help students improve their English.
- My part-time job taught me several new skills.
- Disneyland was a great place for our family holiday.



4 Look again at the paragraph on page 13, *A Birthday Present*. Which sentence is the topic sentence? Circle the topic and underline the main idea.

5 In the following pairs, circle the number of the best topic sentence. Then explain your choice to a partner. Say why the sentence you didn't choose is weak. Use one or more of these reasons:

- It's too broad.
- It's too narrow.
- There is no main idea or opinion.
- There is more than one main idea.

a. 1. Many people in England and the United States have cats.

2. Cats are good company for their owners.

There is no strong opinion or idea about the topic; it is too broad......

b. 1. Studying English at secondary school helps you get a better job.

2. We study English at secondary school.

.....

c. 1. The food and people in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea are very interesting and different, and so are the buildings.

2. Traditional Japanese food is different from Korean food.

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d. 1. My grandfather has helped me in many ways.

2. My grandfather is 86 years old.

.....

e. 1. I really like sports.

2. Rugby has taught me many things about life.

.....

f. 1. There are many environmental problems around the world.

2. It's important to save the rainforests in South America.

.....

g. 1. I got an A on my last maths test.

2. I have a secret technique for learning maths.

.....

6 Improve these topic sentences. Circle the topic. Choose a main idea for each topic and write a topic sentence. Then share your new sentences with a partner or small group.

a. I have a photo of my girlfriend.

idea: *The photo reminds me of her*.....

topic sentence: *I carry a photo of my girlfriend to remind me of her*.....

b. I have a new jacket.

idea:

topic sentence:

c. The Internet is good.

idea:

topic sentence:

d. My friend is nice.

idea:

topic sentence:

e. I learn English at school.

idea:

topic sentence:

Language focus: Using *and* and *but* to join sentences

7 Work with a partner. Look at these pairs of sentences. How are they similar? How are they different? Which do you like better, and why?

a. 1. I sent my mother a birthday card. I called her.

2. I sent my mother a birthday card and called her.

b. 1. I like getting flowers. I don't like getting chocolates.

2. I like getting flowers, but I don't like getting chocolates.

c. 1. I didn't send my brother a birthday present. He didn't send me one.

2. I didn't send my brother a birthday present, and he didn't send me one.

- In each case, the sentences in 2 flow better – that is, they sound more fluent and natural.
- Sentences about the same topic can often be combined with words like *and* and *but*.
- Use *and* to join *similar* ideas. In 7a, the writer did two things for her mother's birthday (sent a card; called her). How are the actions in 7c similar?
- Use *but* to show *contrasting* ideas: good / bad, easy / difficult, positive / negative. What is the contrast in 7b?

8 Look again at the paragraph on page 13, *A Birthday Present*. Underline the sentences joined by *and* and *but*.

9 Complete this paragraph with *and* or *but*.

Same Holiday, Different Customs

People in the United States and Japan celebrate Valentine's Day on 14th February. However, the holiday is celebrated in different ways in each country. In the U.S., Valentine's Day is enjoyed by friends and romantic partners, ^a in Japan usually only romantic partners celebrate this day. Chocolate is the most popular gift in Japan, ^b it is common in the U.S. too. However, in the U.S., other kinds of gifts are also given, ^c many people exchange cards. The biggest difference is that in Japan, girls and women give chocolate to boys and men, ^d in the U.S., boys and girls give cards or small gifts to all of their friends. American men and women give gifts and cards to each other. In fact, women usually get more expensive gifts than men. I would like to be a man in Japan, ^e a woman in the U.S.!



Note: Don't begin sentences with *And* or *But* in academic writing. Use *In addition* or *However* instead.

Language focus: Punctuation

When you join two complete sentences with *but*, you must always use a comma before *but*:

I didn't want to send her a present. I sent her one anyway.

I didn't want to send her a present, but I sent her one anyway.

When you join two complete sentences with *and* and the subjects of the sentences are both written, use a comma before *and*:

Shopping in the town centre is expensive. Parking is hard to find.

Shopping in the town centre is expensive, and parking is hard to find.

(*Shopping* and *parking* are both written.)

When you join two complete sentences and remove the subject of the second sentence, don't use a comma before *and*:

These days people post paper cards. People e-mail electronic cards.

These days people post paper cards and e-mail electronic cards.

These days people send paper and electronic cards.

(The subject *people* is not written a second time.)

10 Join these sentences with *and* or *but*. Use a comma if you need one. Then share your sentences with a partner. Did you make the same choices? Talk about any differences.

a. I got a camera for my birthday. I got clothes for Christmas.

I got a camera for my birthday and clothes for Christmas.

I got a camera for my birthday and I got clothes for Christmas.

b. Ahmed speaks English very well. He enjoys his classes.

c. Yoshi studies hard. He doesn't get good grades.

d. In Asia, most people eat rice for breakfast. In Canada, most people have cereal.

e. Morocco has lovely mountains. Morocco has beautiful beaches.

f. Spanish is spoken in most of South America. Portuguese is spoken in Brazil.

g. Presents are difficult to choose. Presents are fun to give.

h. Noodles are easy to cook. Noodles are popular in many countries.

Put it together

11 Make a quick list of presents you have given and received.

Presents given

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Presents received

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12 Choose one present. Tell your partner about it. Ask and answer questions like these.

Presents given

- Who did you give it to?
- When did you give it?
- Why did you choose this present?
- What did your friend or family member think of the present you gave?
- (your ideas)

Presents received

- Who gave it to you?
- When did you receive it?
- Why did someone choose that present for you?
- What did you think of the present?
- (your ideas)

13 On a separate sheet of paper, write a topic sentence about your present, and then write sentences with *and* and *but*.

14 Exchange papers with a partner.

- Circle your partner's topic and underline the main idea.
- Circle the commas your partner used.
- Talk with your partner and decide if your commas are in the right places.

15 Hand in your sentences to your teacher.