The Topic Sentence

As you know, the central idea of a paper appears in a thesis statement, usually at the end of the introductory paragraph. This is followed by several supporting paragraphs, each of which develops an important idea designed to support the thesis statement. The central idea of each sentence is expressed in a topic sentence, usually the opening sentence of the paragraph on the importance of reading.

The following outline indicates how a thesis statement and topic sentence might fit into the organization of a five-paragraph paper.

Paragraph 1: Several introductory sentences lead up to the thesis statement: Reading is undoubtedly a very valuable habit.
Paragraph 2: Topic sentence: At the very least, reading is a form of recreation, which refreshes and strengthens us in dealing with the problems of daily life.
Paragraph 3: Topic sentence: Reading also introduces us to persons and events beyond our own narrow range of experience.
Paragraph 4: Topic sentence: Most important of all, reading is a source of valuable knowledge.
Paragraph 5: Conclusion

The following diagram illustrates the relationship of the parts in this five-paragraph composition.

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<td>Conclusion</td>
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In developing topic sentences, keep the following points in mind:

1. Each topic sentence should explain one important aspect of the thesis statement.
2. Each topic sentence should state the central idea of its paragraph clearly and directly.
3. Each topic sentence should cover everything in its paragraph. (Or, to put the matter a little differently, the paragraph should not contain anything that does not relate to the topic sentence).

Exercise:

Write on a separate sheet of paper a list of three or four topic sentences for the supporting paragraphs of a paper on one of the following thesis statements:

1. Final exams should [or should not] be abolished.
2. Astrology is [or is not] a sound method of interpreting human affairs.
3. It is [or is not] worthwhile for a college student to study a foreign language.
4. Collecting coins [or stamps] is an educational hobby.
5. One of the most interesting books I have ever read is ___________ [You choose a book].
6. High school should be [should not be] reduced from four years to three years with no loss of learning.