Some quick revision...
The topic sentence is always the first sentence in a body paragraph. It should tell us what the paragraph will be about or what it will be arguing. By the time the reader has finished reading the topic sentence, they should know EXACTLY what the paragraph will be discussing.

A topic sentence needs to provide an ARGUMENT, and it MUST RELATE TO THE ESSAY TOPIC, usually by using KEY TERMS.

Ask yourself: What point are you trying to make?
Example One: Billy’s devotion to a traditionally feminine activity such as ballet shows that he does not feel constrained by gender stereotypes.

Example Two: After experiencing personal loss, some people will react in a way that withdraws or distances them from their loved ones.

Example Three: The series of crises and conflicts encountered by Jackie allows him to grow and change as a father.
In the next sentence or two, you will need to expand on your topic sentence. Explain what you mean in greater detail, and give it a more SPECIFIC FOCUS. This is where you can use some of those factual statements and supporting details that you can’t use in your topic sentence.

*Ask yourself:* What is it that you are trying to say or argue? What exactly do you MEAN?
Topic Sentence One: Billy’s devotion to a traditionally feminine activity such as ballet shows that he does not feel constrained by gender stereotypes.

Expand Example: Although his community expects him to participate in an activity that is usually associated with boys, such as boxing, it is more important to Billy to pursue an activity that he enjoys. By taking ballet lessons, he challenges the idea that some activities are for ‘girls only’ and others are just for boys.
Evidence

You need to provide some evidence to support these claims and show that you are right. This will usually be done through finding a relevant QUOTE from the text you are studying.

*Ask yourself:* What proof do you have that shows that your claim is correct? What in the text supports your argument? What in the text made you think this was true?
Evidence

Evidence Example: Even though Billy at first feels uncomfortable about challenging gender stereotypes, complaining that he “feels like a right sissy”, it is not long until he decides that a boy doing ballet is as “perfectly normal” as “football, or boxing, or wrestling”. His commitment to the idea that he should “always be [him]self” helps him to confidently resist his community’s expectations of what is and isn’t “for lads”. 
Evidence

If you leave out some words, use ELLIPSES: Billy feels “fire in [his] body... like electricity” when he dances.

If you need to change a word (e.g. from ‘dressing’ to ‘dresses’, or ‘we’ to ‘the miners’), use SQUARE BRACKETS: Michael “just dress[es] up” in his sister’s clothes; we are told that “[the miners] are going back”.

Use SHORT QUOTES (one to five words in length) and lots of them!

Quotes should be INCORPORATED FLUENTLY. If you take out the quotation marks, it should read like a regular, grammatically correct sentence.
Finally, you will provide a linking sentence, which **SUMMARISES** your paragraph in a sentence, linking it back to the key terms from your topic sentence.

This is the last sentence of your paragraph. It needs to link everything back to the essay topic and offer a **MINI-CONCLUSION** of the evidence you provided in that paragraph.
**Link Example:** Billy’s rebellion against gender stereotypes through his pursuit of his passion for dance demonstrates the strength that he has inside of himself, and his unwillingness to be caged by the expectations of others.
Billy’s devotion to a traditionally feminine activity such as ballet shows that he does not feel constrained by gender stereotypes. Although his community expects him to participate in an activity that is usually associated with boys, such as boxing, it is more important to Billy to pursue an activity that he enjoys. By taking ballet lessons, he challenges the idea that some activities are for ‘girls only’ and others are just for boys. Even though Billy at first feels uncomfortable about challenging gender stereotypes, complaining that he “feels like a right sissy”, it is not long until he decides that a boy doing ballet is as “perfectly normal” as “football, or boxing, or wrestling”. His commitment to the idea that he should “always be [him]self” helps him to confidently resist his community’s expectations of what is and isn’t “for lads”. Billy’s rebellion against gender stereotypes through his pursuit of his passion for dance demonstrates the strength that he has inside of himself, and his unwillingness to be caged by the expectations of others.
Why do we use this structure?

Can any step be left out?
Why/why not?

What can you do to practise?
To pursue his dream, Billy must overcome his own uncertainties. His doubts of whether he will succeed as a ballet dancer stem from the judgements of others but also come from within himself. The negative attitudes that others have about male ballet dancers undoubtedly have a strong effect on Billy and make him question himself. As his family and fellow townspeople fail to understand his passion for ballet, Billy must learn to follow his own path and break convention. The audience sees Billy’s internal struggle when he must choose between Mrs Wilkinson’s encouragement and Mr Braithwaite’s insistence that he “look[s] like a right wanker.” Once Billy chooses to dance, he begins to listen to his own voice and silences the criticisms of others. Billy is able to rise above others’ prejudice due to the support of Mrs Wilkinson, Michael and his mother. In their own way, these characters provide Billy with unconditional support. His mother’s advice to “always be yourself” provides Billy with the necessary encouragement to follow his passion. However, learning to trust his instincts is not an easy process for Billy and he inevitably cracks under pressure. This is evident when he yells at Mrs Wilkinson before his audition as he takes out his frustration and fear of failure on her. Ultimately, it is Billy’s determination and passion that enables him to succeed in his audition at the Royal Ballet Academy. His love of dancing allows him to “feel a change in [his] whole body” and display courage to show his true self. Billy’s willingness to conquer his nerves and explain this transformative feeling to the panel of judges demonstrates the strength and certainty that he finds when he dances.
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RULE 1: Use FORMAL language

• An essay is a very formal piece of writing. It is not a conversation with a friend. It needs to be written in a formal, academic manner.

• “I think Billy gets lots of criticism because some people hold stupid stereotypes and this makes it hard for Billy to dance.” – INFORMAL

• “The negative attitudes that others have about male ballet dancers undoubtedly have a strong effect on Billy.” - FORMAL
RULE 2: Write in the THIRD person!

- This is your piece of writing so the reader knows that it is your opinion. You should therefore never use ‘I…’
- It is much stronger to write in the third person: ‘Billy…’ ‘Jackie…’ ‘The characters…’ ‘The audience…’
- Do not write: ‘I think..’
- Instead write: ‘It could be argued that…’ or ‘This is evident when…’
RULE 3: Do NOT use contractions

• A contraction is where you abbreviate a word by adding an apostrophe.

• Do NOT use: don’t, can’t, should’ve, etc.

• Instead use: do not, cannot, should have, etc.