

A stack of white papers or documents, slightly blurred, set against a light blue background.

# Reading Skills

A stack of white papers or documents, slightly blurred, set against a light blue background.

Main Ideas and Supporting Details



# Topic versus Main Idea

- To find the **topic** of a passage, you need to ask yourself *“What is the passage about?”*
- To find the **main idea** of a passage, ask yourself *“What is the author saying about the topic?”*



# Finding the Main Idea

- The Main Idea is often found in the first 1/3 of the passage or article.
- It may be repeated in different ways (using different vocabulary) throughout the passage or article.



# Finding the Main Idea





# Finding the Main Idea

- When you think that you have found the main idea, ask yourself the following question:

*“Do the examples, reasons, and/or explanations included in the reading support the main idea?”* If they do, then you have likely found the main idea of the reading.



# Supporting Details

- Supporting details are sentences that explain the main idea.



# General Idea versus Specific Details

- The **main idea** in a reading is a *general idea*. In contrast, the **supporting information** in the reading is made up of *specific details*.
- You need to recognize the difference between the general idea and specific details.



# General vs. Specific Ideas

- **General ideas:** broad ideas that apply to a large number of individual items
  - Clothing
  - Baklava
- **Specific details:** clear and/or more detailed information about an individual item
  - Scarf, coat, shoes
  - Cevizli baklava, fıstıklı baklava, şöbiyet baklava





What is the **general** word in each group?

a) jealousy hatred emotions worry

b) spiders cockroaches mosquitoes insects

c) chemistry science physics biology



# Answer:

- a) jealousy
- hatred
- emotions**
- worry

The **general** idea is "*emotions*" because it includes all of the others as examples.



# Answer:

- b) spiders
- cockroaches
- mosquitoes
- insects

The **general** idea is "*insects*" because it includes all of the others as examples.



# Answer:

- c) chemistry
- science
- physics
- biology

The **general** idea is "science" because it includes all of the others as examples.





## What is the Main Idea of this passage?

- Television can be an excellent teacher for everyone from very young children to the oldest of viewers. Television entertains young children with educational programs and songs. It can provide company for older viewers who are alone at home with no one to talk to. New immigrants can learn the local language just by turning on the television. In sum, television is a good learning tool for all people of all ages.



## Main Idea and Supporting Details

- **Television** can be an excellent teacher for everyone from very young children to the oldest of viewers. **Television** entertains young children with educational programs and songs. **It** can provide company for older viewers who are alone at home with no one to talk to. New immigrants can learn the local language just by turning on the **television**. In sum, **television** is a good learning tool for all people of all ages.



# Finding the Main Idea

- **Locate the Topic**--person, place, object, idea
- **Locate the Most General Sentence**--the topic sentence
- **Study the Details**--all the sentences in a paragraph must relate/support/explain the main idea.



# Types of Supporting Details

- **Examples**
- **Explanations**
- **Reasons**
- **Descriptions**





## To sum up,

- Distinguish between specific and general words
- Distinguish between specific and general sentences
- Identify the topic of a reading
- Identify the controlling thought in each paragraph
- Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph
- Identify supporting details in each paragraph

