

Main or Central Idea/Topics

Topic	The subject of the passage. This is usually broad and simple such as a passage about dogs, the sun, friendship, etc.
Main Idea	<p>The central thought or message as it relates to the topic. The term <i>main idea</i> refers to the point or thought being expressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main idea will answer the questions the “who” or the “what.”• The main idea is usually placed in the first sentence.• The next most common placement is in the last sentence of a paragraph. The author gives supporting information first and then makes the point in the last sentence.
Supporting details	Data which supports the main idea by telling how, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many.
Topic Sentence	The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the topic sentence of that paragraph.

Identifying the Topic:

The first thing you must be able to do to get at the main idea of a paragraph is to identify the topic – the subject of the paragraph. Your strategy for topic identification is simply to ask yourself the question, "What is this about?" Keep asking yourself that question as you read a paragraph, until the answer to your question becomes clear. Sometimes you can spot the topic by looking for a word or two that repeat. Usually, you can state the topic in a few words.