

# Identify Main and Supporting Ideas

**How to use:** Print first for the main practice. Then use the device to repeat activities and save progress.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Identify the main idea of a paragraph
- 2 Distinguish supporting details from off-topic sentences
- 3 Explain how supporting ideas connect to the main idea

## MINI LESSON

Every paragraph has one main idea — the central point the writer wants to make. Supporting details are sentences that explain, prove, or give examples of that main idea. Off-topic sentences do not belong because they change the subject.

### What Is a Main Idea?

- The main idea is usually the first or last sentence of a paragraph.
- It makes a claim or introduces a topic that the rest of the paragraph discusses.
- Every other sentence should support, explain, or develop the main idea.

### What Are Supporting Details?

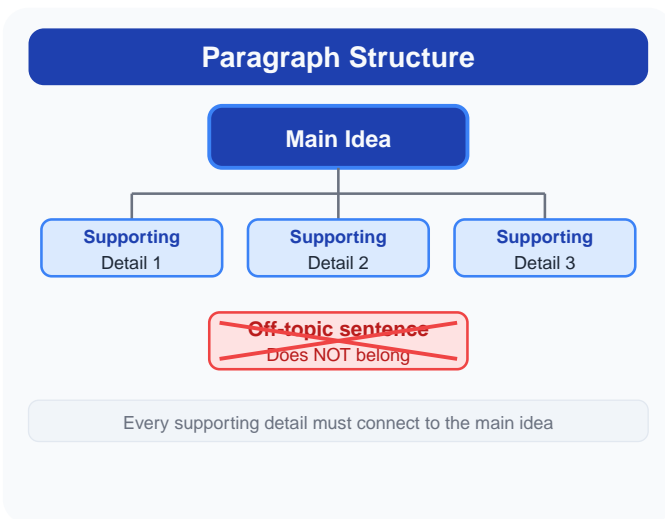
- Supporting details give facts, examples, reasons, or descriptions.
- Each supporting detail answers a question raised by the main idea.
- Remove any sentence that does not answer that question — it is off-topic.

### Off-Topic Sentences

- An off-topic sentence introduces a different subject.
- It breaks the unity of the paragraph and confuses the reader.
- Example: A paragraph about dogs and their loyalty should not mention fish tanks.

! Tip: Ask yourself "Does this sentence help explain the main idea?" If the answer is no, the sentence is off-topic.

VOCABULARY	
<b>main idea</b>	The most important point a paragraph makes. <i>e.g. The main idea of the paragraph was that rainforests are important.</i>
<b>supporting detail</b>	A sentence that explains, proves, or gives an example of the main idea. <i>e.g. Rainforests produce 20% of the worlds oxygen — a supporting detail.</i>
<b>topic</b>	What the paragraph is about. <i>e.g. The topic of the paragraph is healthy eating.</i>
<b>off-topic</b>	Not related to the main idea. <i>e.g. A sentence about pets in a paragraph about plants is off-topic.</i>
<b>paragraph</b>	A group of sentences that focus on one main idea. <i>e.g. Each new paragraph starts on a new line.</i>



### Main vs Supporting vs Off-topic

Main Idea	Supporting	Off-topic
<b>One per para</b> Controls the whole topic	<b>Two or more</b> Explains or proves main idea	<b>Remove it</b> Changes subject or distracts
<p><b>Example</b></p> <p><b>Main:</b> Dogs make great pets.</p> <p><b>Supp:</b> They are loyal and friendly.</p> <p><b>Off:</b> <span style="color: red;">Cats also drink milk.</span></p>		
All details must connect to the main idea		

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## EXERCISES — SORT & MATCH

Sort each sentence into the correct bucket.

### SENTENCES TO SORT

1. Rainforests are important to the planet.
2. They produce about 20% of the world's oxygen.
3. Thousands of plant and animal species live there.
4. Rainforests help regulate the global climate.
5. Some people enjoy going on beach holidays.
6. My favourite sport is basketball.

Write the number of each sentence in the correct bucket below.

Main Idea	Supporting Detail	Off-topic
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*"Flip the page upside down to see the answer key"*

Main Idea: Rainforests are important to the planet. | Supporting Detail: They produce about 20% of the world's oxygen. | Off-topic: Some people enjoy going on beach holidays. | My favourite animal species live there. | Rainforests help regulate the global climate. | Off-topic: Some people enjoy going on beach holidays. | My favourite sport is basketball.

### EXERCISES — FILL IN THE BLANKS

Fill in each blank.

1. The sentence that states the central point of a paragraph is called the \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. A sentence that explains or gives an example of the main idea is a \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. A sentence that changes the subject and does not connect to the main idea is \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. In an outline, the main idea goes at the \_\_\_\_\_ , and supporting details go below it.
5. Every supporting detail should answer a question raised by the \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. A paragraph that sticks to one topic is said to have \_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Flip the page upside down to see the answer key"*

1. main idea 2. supporting detail 3. off-topic 4. top 5. main idea 6. unity

### PRACTICE — DICTATION / TYPING

Write from memory — no looking back.

## What is the difference between a supporting detail and an off-topic sentence?

A supporting detail connects to the main idea; an off-topic sentence changes the subject.

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### EXERCISES — MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the best answer.

#### 1. What is the main idea of a paragraph?

- The longest sentence in the paragraph
- The central point or claim the writer wants to make
- A sentence that gives an interesting extra fact

#### 2. Which sentence is off-topic in a paragraph about healthy eating?

- Fruits and vegetables provide important vitamins.
- Drinking water keeps the body hydrated.
- My sister likes to play video games.

#### 3. Where is the main idea usually found in a paragraph?

- Only in the middle of the paragraph
- Often at the beginning or end of the paragraph
- It is never written down explicitly

#### 4. What is a supporting detail?

- A sentence that changes the subject of the paragraph
- A fact, example, or reason that explains the main idea
- A sentence copied from another paragraph

#### 5. A paragraph about ocean pollution mentions that dolphins are mammals. Is this off-topic?

- No, because dolphins live in the ocean
- Yes, because it is about dolphin biology, not pollution
- No, because all ocean facts are supporting details

#### 6. What does it mean for a paragraph to have "unity"?

- It has exactly five sentences.
- Every sentence connects to the same main idea.
- It uses many different topics.

#### 7. Which is the best main idea sentence for a paragraph about libraries?

- Libraries have books.
- Libraries offer many resources that help people learn and grow.
- I went to the library on Tuesday.

#### 8. How many main ideas should a well-written paragraph have?

- One
- Two or three
- As many as possible

"Flip the page upside down to see the answer key"

1. b 2. c 3. b 4. b 5. b 6. b 7. b 8. a

## ASSESSMENT

### PARENT / TEACHER CHECKLIST

- Identifies the main idea sentence in a given paragraph.
- Selects all supporting details and explains how each connects to the main idea.
- Spots and removes off-topic sentences from a paragraph.
- Writes a simple outline with a main idea and two supporting details.