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## Main Idea

The main idea is the central or most important idea in a paragraph. Knowing the main idea helps *readers to recall the important information*. The main idea can be explicit or implicit.

### Explicit Main idea

An explicit main idea is expressed as a single statement in the paragraph. This statement is usually found in the first or last two sentences of the paragraph.

### Implicit Main idea

Sometimes the author does not provide a main idea. This means the reader needs to consider all the details and then produce a single statement that conveys the main idea.

## How do I find an explicit main idea?

Check to see if you have found the explicit main idea by following these steps:

- 1 Read the paragraph and identify the topic.
- 2 Look for a single statement that provides the central idea about the topic.
- 3 Find two or three details that support the main idea. If you have found the main idea, it will be easy to find supporting details.

## Try it out! *Read this paragraph.*

Giant hogweed can grow up to six metres tall and is covered in clusters of white flowers. This plant is a dangerous weed that releases a toxic sap that can harm a person. The sap causes deep, painful blisters that form within 48 hours. These blisters can persist for weeks. The blisters can leave scars that last for up to six years. The sap also causes long-term sensitivity to sunlight. People need to wear protective clothing if they touch this plant.

- 1 What is the topic of the paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Circle the sentence that is the main idea.
- 3 Underline two details that support the main idea.

## How do I find an implicit main idea?

Check to see if you have found the implicit main idea by following these steps:

- 1 Read the paragraph and identify the topic.
- 2 Ask yourself two questions:  
*"What is the author's central message about this topic?"*  
*"What do each of the details of the paragraph have in common?"*
- 3 Write a sentence that summarizes the main point that the author wants to make about the topic.
- 4 Find two or three details that support the main idea. If you have found the main idea, it will be easy to find supporting details.

### Try it out! *Read this paragraph.*

Facebook recently announced that it has one billion active users worldwide. It provides a way for people to document their lives. Facebook allows people to connect with far away friends and distant family members. Some people use Facebook because it's a place to share thoughts, causes, and ideas. Some people don't join Facebook because they are concerned about having their privacy invaded. Others find it time consuming. Also, cyberbullying can be a real problem. Despite the drawbacks, Facebook continues to be the world's most famous networking site.

- 1 What is the topic of this paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Which of the following is the main idea?
  - A. Facebook is the world's number one networking site.
  - B. Facebook, a famous networking site, has benefits and drawbacks.
  - C. Facebook, a famous networking site, violated people's privacy by sharing data.
- 3 Underline two details in the paragraph that support the main idea.



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**Nature** *and* **Science**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

*The migration of birds is a sign that seasons are changing.*

**Topic: Migration**

Many birds migrate to different places, countries and even continents! How do they know where to go? Why don't they get lost? Scientists believe there are several different methods birds use to **navigate**. Some birds have a mineral called magnetite above their beak. This mineral helps birds use the Earth's magnetic field to navigate. Some birds find their way by using landmarks such as rivers or mountains. Birds that migrate during the day use the position of the sun. And those that migrate at night use the moon and the stars. Birds have created their own "maps" to help them navigate.

**navigate:** to find the way to get to a place.

- 1 Underline the sentence in the paragraph that is the main idea.
- 2 Which one of the following is *not* a supporting detail?  
Circle the correct answer.
  - A. Birds that migrate at night use the moon and the stars.
  - B. Many birds migrate to different places, countries and even continents!
  - C. Some birds find their way by using landmarks such as rivers and mountains.