

USE MAIN IDEAS AND SUPPORTING DETAILS TO DETERMINE IMPORTANCE

UNDERSTAND	Definition	Readers are able to understand the most important idea about what they are reading and find examples that clarify its importance. The main idea is often stated in a sentence in the passage, and other sentences convey more information about it.
	When to teach this strategy	<p>If you see readers who . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instead of stating the main idea, state the theme or topic. • retell or summarize without getting to the most important information. • may need to learn to infer the main idea, since it is not always stated explicitly in the text.
PREPARE	Why we teach it	Identifying and understanding main ideas and determining importance are prerequisite skills to summarizing text. Readers summarize the most important aspects of the text by determining the details that are significant and discarding those that are not while saying the main idea in their own words, thus improving comprehension.
	Secret to success	When constructing the main idea of a piece of text, the reader may start with a topic they think the selection is about and then add one detail to support it.
TEACH	How we teach it	<p>First we establish a common language with our students by teaching and reviewing the following terms: <i>topic</i>, <i>main idea</i>, <i>theme</i>, and <i>supporting details</i>. We find that when students understand these terms, they are on the right path to understanding main idea. We then model the process of determining the main idea by always supporting our claim with evidence from the text.</p> <p>The terms:</p> <p>The topic is the subject, or what the text is about.</p> <p>The main idea is the most important idea about the topic from an entire selection or just a paragraph and can be expressed in a sentence or two. When we identify the main idea, it is usually in a sentence; if we say just a word, we are probably referring only to the topic.</p> <p>A theme is the big idea from the text. This is often an idea or lesson the author wants the reader to know from reading the text.</p> <p>Supporting details are bits of information that are used to verify and support the main idea.</p>
		<p>Suggested language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In a few words, what is this selection about?</i> • <i>What would you say is the most important idea about this topic?</i> • <i>Did you find the main idea stated in the passage or did you have to infer it?</i>
SUPPORT	Instructional Pivots	<p>Possible ways to differentiate instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the main idea is not stated in a sentence in the passage, the reader must infer it, based on the details and their prior knowledge of the topic and what they learn from the text. We are clear with students that this process of determining the main idea can require considerable thinking and hard work. • To support students who need scaffolding for this strategy, we may meet every day for a week, checking in on them and asking them to identify the main idea with supporting details. <p>Reconsider materials, setting, instruction, and cognitive processes.</p>
	Partner Strategies	<p>These strategies may provide support before, during, and after teaching this strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Summarize Text; Include Important Details</i> • <i>Recognize Literary Elements</i> • <i>Infer and Support with Evidence</i>