

in either the first or last sentence of a paragraph. Ask them to look for the words repeated over and over again. Ask them to underline all the supporting details that directly support the main idea.

**Step 4:** Once the passage has been read completely, pass out Main Idea Graphic Organizer and have the students work collaboratively to write the main idea and the supporting details on the graphic organizer (See Appendix 1).

**Step 5:** Repeat this activity several times during the different class sessions so that students can fully understand how to determine and state the main idea and details. If students have difficulty finding the main idea, read the passage aloud and provide choices for the main idea statement and the details. Challenge them to state the main idea since students need to be involved in many guided practice on short texts in order to acquire mastery in identifying the main idea.

**Step 6:** As a follow-up activity, get them

to read more assigned reading passages and fill in the graphic organizer at home.

### Conclusion

When students are equipped with the skill of identifying main ideas and working out the relationship between main ideas and supporting details, their reading comprehension improves. Main ideas let students differentiate between the important information and the less important details in a text.

The ability to identify the main idea in a text is critical for students to gain meaning when reading. The teachers should explicitly teach students the concept of main idea. When teaching the main idea, first short one paragraph texts should be chosen on a familiar topic. Then, two or more paragraph texts are introduced.

### Reference

Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Mistretta, J., & Echevarria, M. (1998). Literacy instruction in ten fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in upstate New York. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 2*, 159-194.

## Appendix 1

### Main Idea

*The **main idea** tells about all the parts of a text in just a few words.*

*Every text has a main idea and details.*

***Details** tell about the parts of the text.*

#### MAIN IDEA 1:

Exercise is important.

#### DETAILS:

It keeps body and mind healthy. You feel good and look good.

#### MAIN IDEA 2:

Aerobics effectively affects health.

#### DETAILS:

Your heart gets stronger or bigger.  
The number of blood cells increases.  
Blood carries more oxygen and moves more easily.

TOPIC:  
EXERCISE

#### MAINE IDEA 3:

Exercising makes you feel happy.

#### DETAILS:

Body releases endorphins.  
Brain enjoys the extra oxygen.  
You hardly think about what bothers you.

#### MAIN IDEA 4:

Doing exercise makes you feel proud.

#### DETAILS:

It makes you stronger.  
You do the things better.  
You feel better.

# Main Idea

# Graphic Organizer

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## Quick Guide

To enhance the comprehension of a text, students are required to read selectively. This reading comprehension skill helps them consciously determine what part of a text is important, what is supportive, and what is less important. Pressley et al. (1998) found that students' comprehension was not boosted by merely reading more text but applying reading skills can improve comprehension. Teachers as models can show the students how to identify the main idea and details in a text and organize the information in a Main Idea Graphic Organizer.

**Proficiency level:** High school students-grade 12

**Activity time and place:** 30 minutes to model the main idea identification skill in the 1st class session

**Materials:** Students' English Book as well as various reading passages, Main Idea Graphic Organizer for all students

**Key Words:** main idea, detail, topic, graphic organizer

## Introduction

Students will be better readers and comprehend more if they are explicitly taught how to classify the information

in a text into the main idea and details. Teachers play the role of a model for the students to show them how to find the main idea and the details supporting the main idea. Students are provided with reading passages each session of the class as well as the graphic organizer to practice this skill.

## Lesson Procedure:

**Step 1:** Choose a short text or section of text and read it prior to the reading session. Here the first lesson of *Learning to Read English* for pre-university students has been chosen.

**Step 2:** Explain the concepts of *main idea*, *details topic* and their important role in text comprehending to students. The topic of a text is the subject, or what the text is about. A topic can be expressed as a noun or a noun phrase. Some examples of topics include education, memory, and exercise. However, an idea is what you say about a topic, which is expressed as a sentence.

**Step 3:** Read the selected text aloud to students and give explanations wherever necessary. Model the process of determining the main idea of a text. Let them know that a main idea is the most important idea in a passage usually stated



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## Guidelines for Publishing in My Contribution

The column entitled *My Contribution* is a recent initiative which is intended to be a forum for sharing lesson plans and procedures for classroom activities. Our assumption is that all teachers have original ideas for running their lessons which work for them. We welcome a contribution which reflects an original idea. Ideas taken from teachers' guides can be of no help unless they are sufficiently modified. The sign of an original idea is that it is a source of excitement and pride to the originator to the extent that he/she would like to tell others how it works. You can imagine yourself telling your colleague in a very simple clear language how you carry out the activity in your class in a stepwise manner. As your account is procedural it follows a certain structure which is different from the structure of a research article. The column includes instructions which tell the reader how to carry out the teaching activities like the ones one can find in a recipe. In some cases specially in the conclusion part you might want to provide a rationale for the activity by referring to the literature but this needs to be kept at a minimum.

It should be noted that a lesson plan is the blueprint of those teaching activities that are to be done in the classroom to teach the textbook content with the aim of achieving its objectives. Every teacher tries to plan the content in his/her own style so that he/she can teach systematically and effectively. You can see the detailed guidelines for writing *My Contribution* in the box below.

### Your "My Contribution" should include:

- A title, your name, affiliation, and email address;
  - A "Quick guide" to the activity or teaching technique;
  - No more than 700 words excluding the appendixes;
  - An introduction (i.e. overview) followed by preparation and procedure steps and a conclusion.
- It should be:
- In Microsoft Word format;
  - Double-spaced with an extra space between sections.