

# Main Idea

## Objective

Students will identify the main idea of paragraphs.

## Materials

- Three simple texts with multiple paragraphs (a text to model, a text to use with the class, and a text for students to use in pairs)—consider texts from a basal reader, novel, trade book, or content area textbook
- Identifying the Main Idea handout

## Overview

First, model the activity. Then, complete the activity as a class. Finally, assign students to work in pairs. This strategy can be used with narrative and expository text.

## Activity

1. Distribute the texts and Identifying the Main Idea handout.
2. Introduce the strategy. Tell students that a main idea statement is a combination of two parts:
  - The most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph—the main person, place, or thing
  - The most important information about the “who” or “what”
3. Tell students that the main idea statement usually is 10 or fewer words. Model using the 10-finger rule of counting each word using the fingers of both hands.
4. Model the activity for students with your model text.
5. Complete the activity with students as a class with your second text.
6. Assign partners. In each partnership, the third text should be at the independent level for one student (the student can read the text independently with ease) and at the instructional level for the other student (the student needs support to read the text).
7. Tell partners to alternate reading each paragraph in the text, completing the corresponding section of the handout after each paragraph.
8. Tell students to try to shrink down the information if their main idea statement is more than 10 words.

Adapted from Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at The University of Texas at Austin. (2009). *Teacher reading academies*. Austin, TX: Author.

## Identifying the Main Idea

### Paragraph 1

Write the most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph:

Write three important facts, details, or ideas about the most important “who” or “what.”

1.

2.

3.

Write a sentence that states the main idea in 10 or fewer words:

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### Paragraph 2

Write the most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph:

Write three important facts, details, or ideas about the most important “who” or “what.”

1.

2.

3.

Write a sentence that states the main idea in 10 or fewer words:

### **Paragraph 3**

Write the most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph:

Write three important facts, details, or ideas about the most important “who” or “what.”

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

Write a sentence that states the main idea in 10 or fewer words:

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### **Paragraph 4**

Write the most important “who” or “what” in the paragraph:

Write three important facts, details, or ideas about the most important “who” or “what.”

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

Write a sentence that states the main idea in 10 or fewer words: