

The **main idea** of a paragraph is the primary point or concept that the author wants to communicate to the readers about the topic.

Hence, in a paragraph, when the main idea is **stated directly**, it is expressed in what is called the **topic sentence**. It gives the overarching idea of what the paragraph is about and is supported by the details in subsequent sentences in the paragraph.

When an author does not state the main idea directly, it should still be implied, and is called **an implied main idea**. This requires that the reader look closely at the content—at specific words, sentences, images that are used and repeated—to deduce what the author is communicating.

Stated Main Idea

Must always **contain the topic** (the word, name, or phrase that tells who or what the paragraph is about)

Must always **make complete sense** by itself (even if you couldn't read the rest of the paragraph)

Must be a general sentence that **sums up the details** in the paragraph

Implied main idea

Must be general enough to cover all the details,

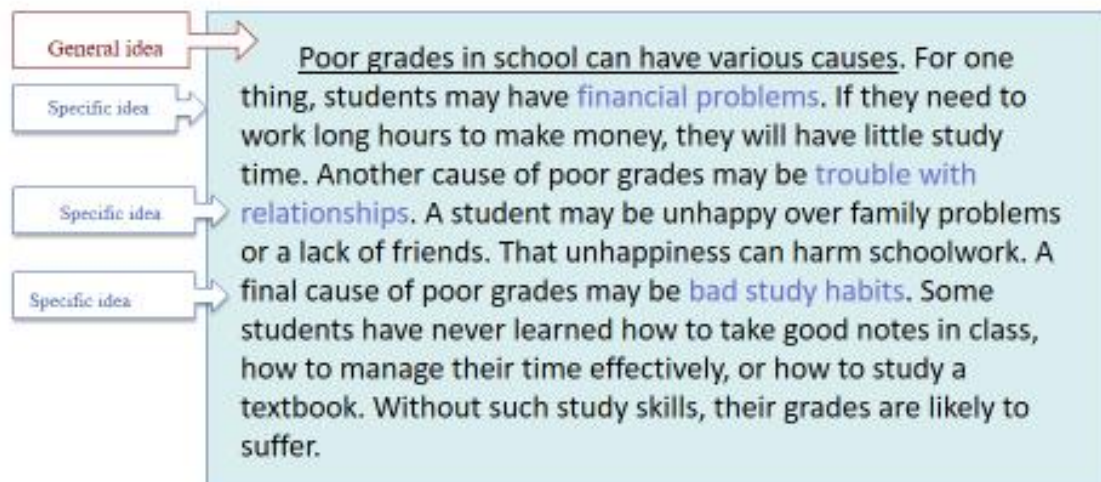
Must not be so broad that it is an overgeneralization

Must not be a sweeping statement that suggests details not given

DO NOT

1. Summarize / Title
2. Begin the sentence with
 - The writer says
 - The main idea is
 - Quotation marks
3. Write more than one idea
4. Write Multiple sentences
5. Write a Question

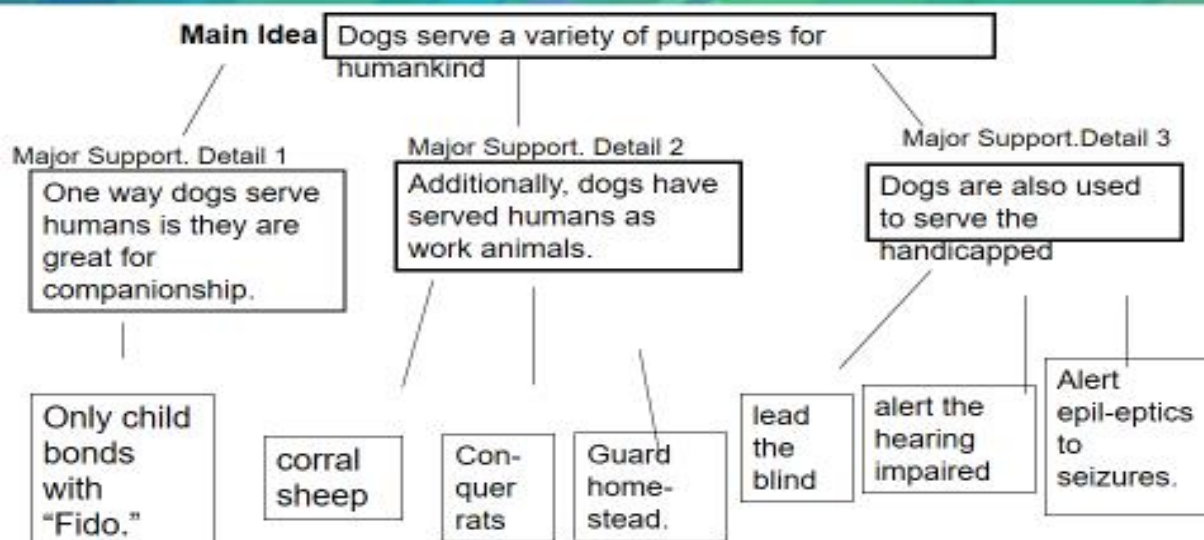
General vs. Specific Ideas



The specific ideas or the **Major Supporting Details** are further explained by **Minor Supporting Details**.

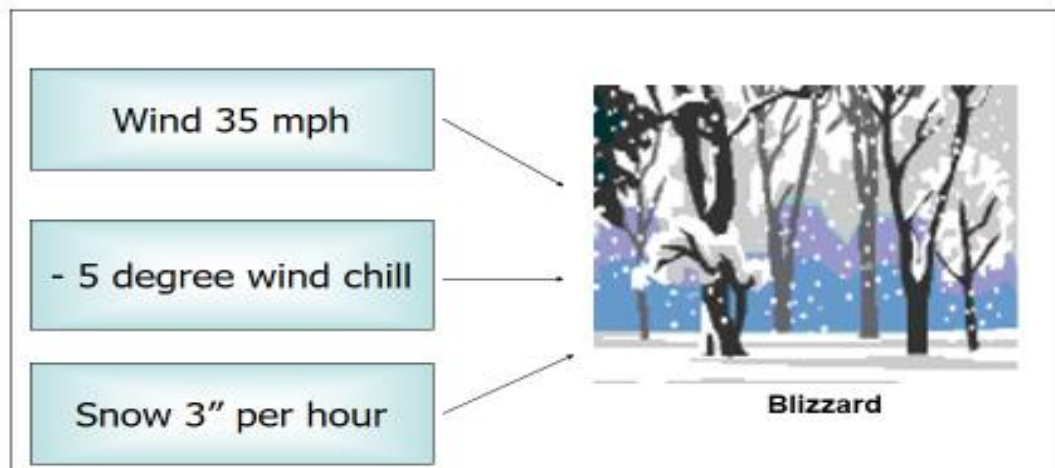
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Let's look at the layout again:



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Figuring Out Implied Main Ideas



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Implied Main Ideas

All people have a strong need to belong to groups, stemming from evolutionary pressures that increased people's chance of survival and reproduction when in groups rather than in isolation. This need may **also** be driven by the desire to feel protected against threat and uncertainty in everyday life or to gain a greater sense of personal and social identity. **Moreover**, people join specific groups in order to accomplish things that they cannot accomplish as individuals. Neither symphonies nor football games can be played by one person alone, and many types of work require team effort. **Further**, people join groups because of the social status and identity that they offer. An important part of people's feelings of self-worth comes from their identification with particular groups. Even a relatively low-status group can be a source of pride for individuals who are held in high esteem within the group; being big fish in small ponds can make people feel good about themselves, particularly people from individualist cultures. **Finally**, people may join groups simply because they like the members and want to have the opportunity to interact with them.

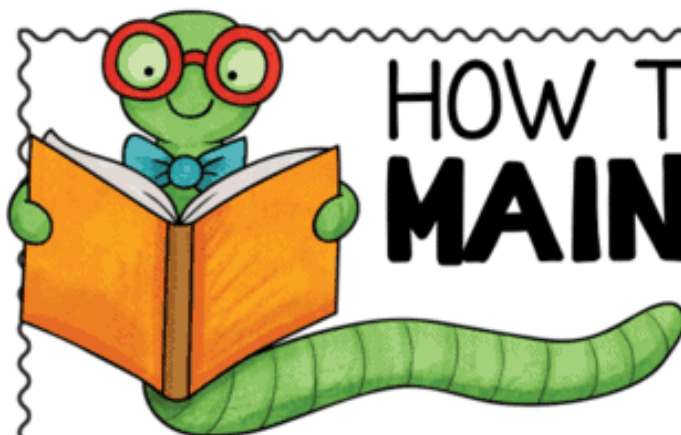
What is the **implied main idea** of the paragraph?

People join groups for a number of reasons.

Explanation

Each **major detail** in the paragraph is one reason that people join groups. Note that four of the major details are signaled by **addition words**.

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HOW TO FIND **MAIN IDEA**

BEFORE YOU READ:

- ☐ Read the title.
- ☐ What is the text about?
- ☐ What is the topic?

DURING THE READING:

- ☐ Look for and carefully read text features.
- ☐ Is the text fiction, non-fiction...
- ☐ Look for information, words, and pictures that are repeated.

AFTER YOU READ:

- ☐ Think about the most important point about the topic.
- ☐ What details or examples back up and support the main idea?