

Main Idea

Supporting Ideas

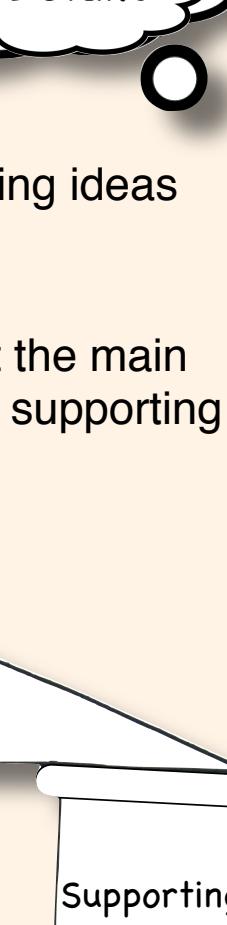
Details

On a reading test, you often see the same question. The question is, "What is the main idea?"

Information from the reading

1. What is the main idea of the

2. Explain what is meant by

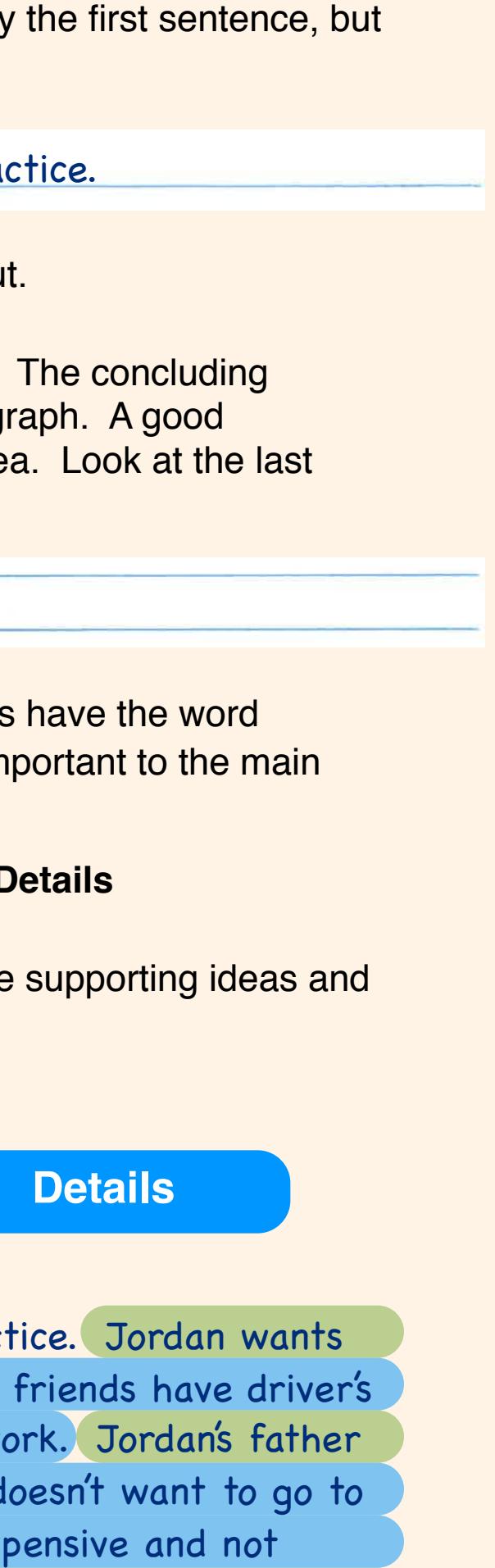


To understand the main idea, you need to understand the **topic**. The topic is **who** or **what** it is about. You also need to understand the **events**. The events are **what is happening**.

Every sentence in a paragraph communicates an idea.

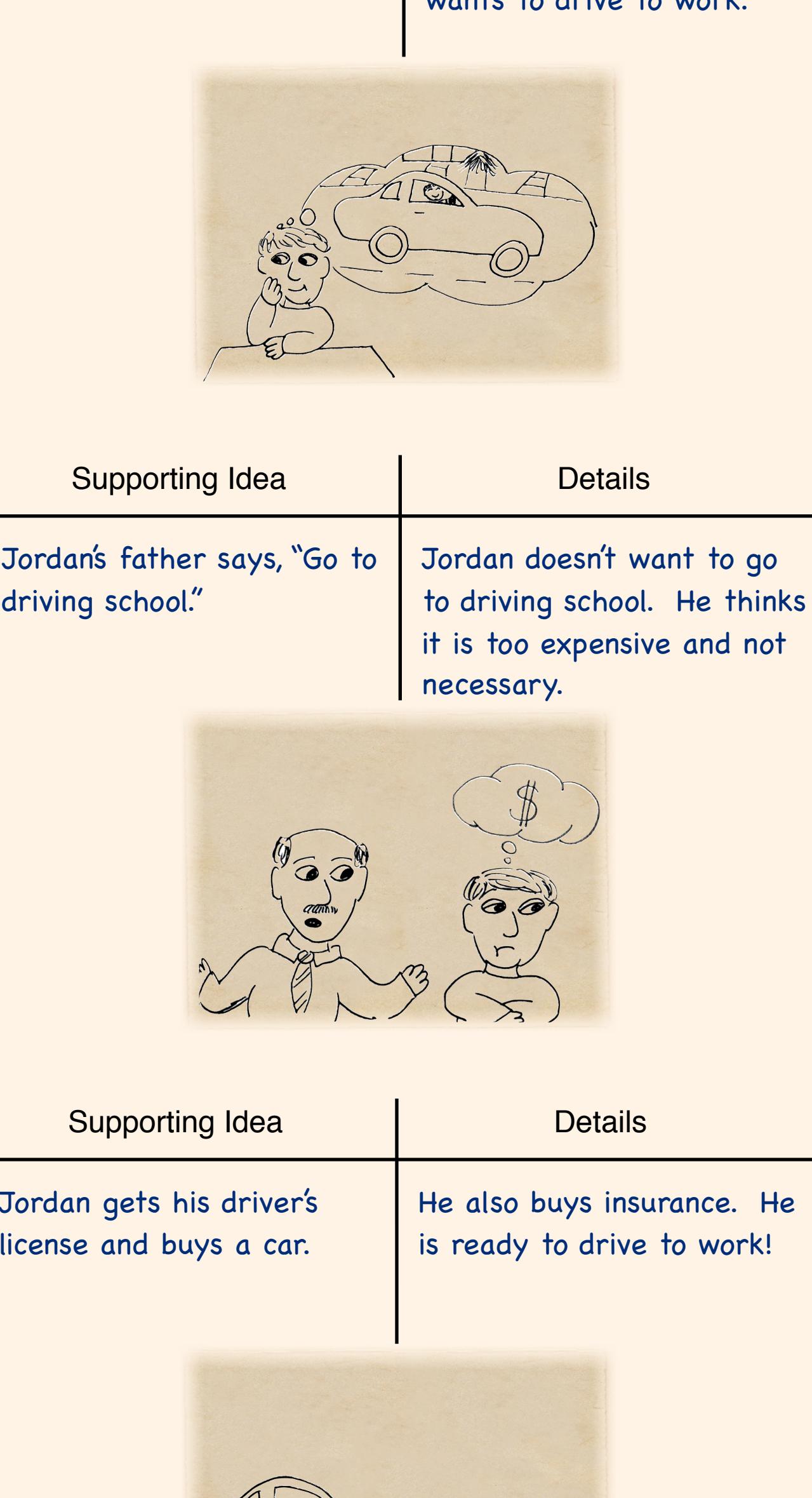
Sentence = Idea

All of these sentences become part of a larger idea.



A well written paragraph has a main idea, supporting ideas and details.

The supporting ideas give more information about the main idea. The details give more information about the supporting ideas.



Practice:
Read this paragraph. What is the main idea?

Being a safe driver takes practice. Jordan wants his driver's license now. Some of his friends have driver's licenses. Jordan wants to drive to work. Jordan's father says, "Go to driving school." Jordan doesn't want to go to driving school. He thinks it is too expensive and not necessary. Jordan gets his driver's license and buys a car. He also buys insurance. He is ready to drive to work! Two weeks later, Jordan has a car accident. Jordan is okay, but his car is wrecked. The insurance company tells Jordan, "You are not a safe driver. You must pay more money for insurance. You must also go to driving school. You need more practice."

First, look at the **topic** sentence. The topic sentence tells the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence is at the beginning of the paragraph. It is usually the first sentence, but not always.

Being a safe driver takes practice.

This sentence tells us **what** this is about.

Next, look at the **concluding** sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence of a paragraph. A good concluding sentence retells the main idea. Look at the last sentence:

You need more practice.

Both the topic and concluding sentences have the word 'practice'. We know that 'practice' is important to the main idea.

Supporting Ideas & Details

Look at the same paragraph. Identify the supporting ideas and the details.

Supporting Ideas

Details

Being a safe driver takes practice. Jordan wants his driver's license now. Some of his friends have driver's licenses. Jordan wants to drive to work. Jordan's father says, "Go to driving school." Jordan doesn't want to go to driving school. He thinks it is too expensive and not necessary. Jordan gets his driver's license and buys a car. He also buys insurance. He is ready to drive to work! Two weeks later, Jordan has a car accident. Jordan is okay, but his car is wrecked. The insurance company tells Jordan, "You are not a safe driver. You must pay more money for insurance. You must also go to driving school. You need more practice."

The details give more information about the supporting ideas. These T-charts show the relationship between the supporting ideas and details.

Supporting Idea

Details

Jordan wants his driver's license now.

Some of his friends have driver's licenses. Jordan wants to drive to work.

Supporting Idea

Details

Jordan's father says, "Go to driving school."

Jordan doesn't want to go to driving school. He thinks it is too expensive and not necessary.

Supporting Idea

Details

Jordan gets his driver's license and buys a car.

He also buys insurance. He is ready to drive to work!

Supporting Idea

Details

Two weeks later, Jordan has a car accident.

Jordan is okay, but his car is wrecked.

Supporting Idea

Details

The insurance company tells Jordan, "You are not a safe driver."

You must pay more money for insurance. You must also go to driving school. You need more practice."

Main Idea Summary

A main idea summary is:

✓ the main idea and the most important supporting ideas

✓ shorter than the original text

✓ written in different words (your own words)

Sample Main Idea Summaries:

Safe drivers must practice. Jordan had a car accident. He must take driver's education.

or

Jordan bought a car, but he had an accident. He must go to school to get more driving practice.

or

Jordan isn't ready to drive a car. He must practice and learn how to drive safely.

Conclusion

The main idea is **who** it is about and **what** is happening. The topic sentence and concluding sentence are very important.

These sentences communicate the main idea. It is also important to know which supporting ideas and details are the most important. In order to write a good main idea summary statement, you must include some supporting ideas and details.

Your main idea summary statement must also be in your own words.