

DISTINGUISHING MAIN IDEAS FROM SUPPORTING DETAILS

A good paragraph is made up of sentences that develop a single thought. That thought, is called **main idea**, may be expressed in one or more sentences.

The main idea is the summary of the essential points of the paragraph and it excludes detailed information. The topic sentence is the one sentence from the paragraph, which explains what the paragraph is about. The following sentences are added details, reasons, examples, facts, and ideas that prove, explain, support, or give examples

Finding the main idea and supporting details is helpful in many ways:-

- To understand a paragraph and a passage
- Identify general point the author is making
- Perceive the relationship between the main idea and what is said about the idea

How to find the topic, topic sentence, main idea and supporting details in a paragraph

- ❖ Decide the topic of the paragraph – person, place, things, abstract or idea, even a process
- ❖ Find the topic sentence – can be found in the first sentence, or the last sentence, or in the middle, or sometimes it is implied.
- ❖ After locating the topic sentence, turn the statement into a general question. This will help you focus on **supporting details** of the topic sentence –use 5W 1H question (who, when, where, what, why, how).
- ❖ Once the topic sentence and supporting details have been identified, the main idea can be located.

Example

A sudden increase in robberies has hit Petaling Jaya. The robbers who are mostly drug addicts, steal anything that can be quickly converted into cash. Housing estates are the biggest targets. Residents in Petaling Jaya are aware of this problem and are searching for new methods of protection.

1. What is the paragraph about?
It is about robberies.
2. Which sentence best expresses the main idea of the paragraph?
A sudden increase in robberies has hit Petaling Jaya.