

1. Let's practice finding the main idea of passages and stories.

Every passage or paragraph has a **main idea**. The main idea is the most important idea in a passage or story. A main idea may be stated clearly or suggested through supporting details.


Some paragraphs and stories have one sentence that gives the main idea. This sentence is called the **topic sentence**. The topic sentence gives the reader an idea of what that paragraph or story will be about.

2. Sometimes a passage does not have a topic sentence or a clearly stated main idea. When the main idea is not clearly stated, the supporting details of a paragraph or passage suggest the main idea. All of the details in the passage should support or center around the same, single idea.

When the main idea of a passage is not clearly stated, we say the main idea is implied or the passage has an **implied main idea**.

Poems and stories often have implied main ideas, and you must carefully read the details to find the main ideas. The main idea of a story often involves a lesson learned.

3. Now, read a passage and practice finding the main idea.


BARKER

BOOKSTORE

This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

Come and see what the **Barker Bookstore** has to offer for readers of all ages.


- We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!
- The bookstore also has a small café. Here, you can buy coffee and juices, as well as baked goods and sandwiches. Enjoy your snack at one of our café tables. Eat and talk with your friends or sip a delicious drink while you read.

With so much to offer, after you visit us for our grand opening, you'll return to the **Barker Bookstore** again and again.



4. Let's find the main idea of this passage.

Read the first part again.




This Saturday, the Barker Bookstore opens its doors!

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What is this section mostly about?

The first two sentences tell you a new bookstore is opening soon. These sentences encourage readers to visit the bookstore. The rest of the sentences in the section give details about everything at the bookstore. This section is mostly about what the Barker Bookstore has to offer to readers. The main idea of the section is **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

5. Now, let's read the second part of the passage.

BARKER



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What is the second section mostly about?

The **second section** gives details about the bookstore's café. At the end of the second section, the passage says again that the Barker Bookstore has much to offer. These details support the idea that **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

6. The **speaker's message** is often very close to the main idea of a piece of writing. The speaker can be the narrator of a story or the voice of the writer in a nonfiction passage. The **speaker's message** is what the speaker is trying to tell the reader.

In the passage "Bookstore Grand Opening," the speaker's message matches the main idea. The speaker wants to tell you that **the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers.**

7. Author's Purpose

An author always has a **purpose**, or reason, for writing. An author will have one of these purposes:

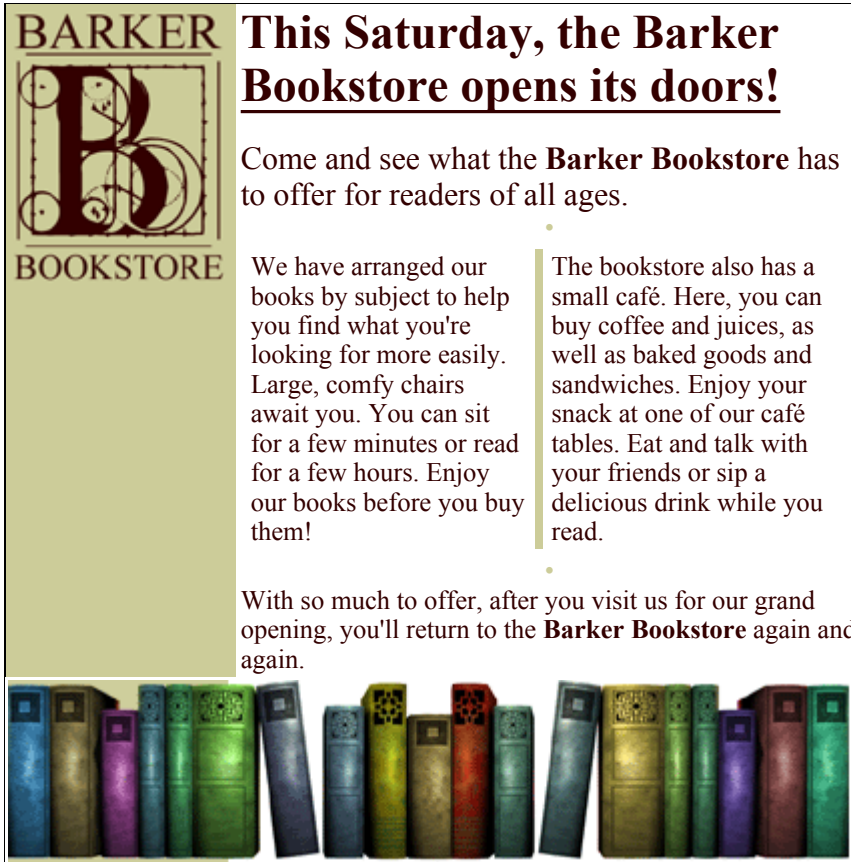
- to inform, or give readers information
- to persuade readers to do or agree with something
- to express his or her own thoughts or feelings
- to entertain readers by telling a story

Knowing the author's purpose can help you when you read. A writer whose purpose is to inform will give you plenty of facts about a topic. You can learn from those facts as you read.

8. Read the passage about the bookstore again.

What is the purpose of this passage?

The **purpose** of a passage is related to the main idea. The main idea of this passage is the Barker Bookstore is a great place for readers. If that is the main idea of the passage, the author's purpose is probably **to persuade readers to visit the Barker Bookstore**.




BARKER
B
BOOKSTORE

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- We have arranged our books by subject to help you find what you're looking for more easily. Large, comfy chairs await you. You can sit for a few minutes or read for a few hours. Enjoy our books before you buy them!
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Now, try to work through the next problems step by step.

1. Now, let's practice finding the main idea.

Read the passage below.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about how fights start between friends?

- A no
- B yes

2. Let's look at the choices again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about people who say mean things?

- A yes
- B no

3. Let's look at the choices again.

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What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how fights start between friends
- B. people who say mean things
- C. taking a time-out to think before you react
- D. a time a friend angered the author

Is this passage mostly about **taking a time-out to think before you react?**

- A** yes
- B** no

4. Now, let's identify the speaker's message.

Read the passage again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

What is the speaker's message in this passage?

- A. Friends who spread rumors are not really your friends.
- B. You should take a minute to cool down before reacting in anger.
- C. People who say something mean should have to take a time-out.
- D. Often, mean comments arise from misunderstandings.

Is the speaker's message that "Friends who spread rumors are not really your friends"?

- A yes
- B no

5. Let's read the choices again.

Time-out!

Has a friend ever said something to you that made you angry? Sometimes people say things without realizing how they make you feel. Sometimes people say things out of disappointment or confusion. You might want to respond right away, but that's not always the best solution.

If someone says something that makes you angry, take a time-out. A time-out means you stop and think before you speak. Saying something mean in response could lead to a fight. If you take a minute to think things over and speak calmly, you may find out it was all a misunderstanding. So, the next time someone says something that makes you angry, don't react to it without thinking. Instead, take a time-out and wait until you feel more calm.

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- D. Often, mean comments arise from misunderstandings.

Is the speaker's message that "You should take a minute to cool down before reacting in anger"?

- A yes
- B no

6. Here's another selection to read.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in this selection?

- A. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.
- B. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland.
- C. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are no longer considered endangered.
- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence A** belong in the selection?

- A** no
- B** yes

7. Read the selection again.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

Which of the following sentences does not belong in this selection?

- A. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.
- B. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland.
- C. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are no longer considered endangered.
- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence B** belong in the selection?

- A** yes
- B** no

8. Read the selection once again.

National Parks

Even though new buildings are built every day, there are places in the United States where no one may build. These places have been preserved, or saved, and they are protected as national parks. The land is protected so people can enjoy the natural beauty of the wilderness.

Each national park has its own special beauty. Everglades National Park in Florida is a vast, green wetland. It is home to animals such as alligators and water birds. American alligators were once on the endangered species list, but now they are not considered endangered. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks. The Everglades and Arches do not look anything alike, but they are both national parks. Like all national parks, these two parks preserve the splendor of the land.

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- D. Arches National Park in Utah is full of red, sculpted rocks.

Does **sentence C** belong in the selection?

- A** yes
- B** no

Now, work these practice problems on your own.

1. **Cookies vs. Cards**

Our class is trying to decide how to raise money. Some students have suggested we have a bake sale, but others think we should sell cards. I will tell you why I think selling cards is a better way to raise money.

First of all, baked goods are not very healthy. In addition, we can't sell cookies and brownies for very much money. If we sell cookies for 50 cents each, we'd need to sell 10 cookies just to make 5 dollars. That's a lot of cookies and a lot of baking.

Using our classroom computer and supplies, we can make really great personal cards. People can order cards for special occasions. They can order cards with their names or with special messages. In addition, we can charge more money for each card. If we charge \$1.00 for a card, we'd only need to sell five cards to make 5 dollars. Also, we wouldn't need to wash any cars.

Which of the following sentences does NOT belong in the passage?

- A** In addition, we can charge more money for each card.
- B** Also, we wouldn't need to wash any cars.
- C** First of all, baked goods are not very healthy.
- D** People can order cards for special occasions.

2. **Going to the Beach**

Do you live close to a beach?
No? Well, neither do we.
We have to travel very far
If we want to see the sea.

We pack our car with tons of stuff,
Like towels, food, and chairs.
And then we pile into the car
And ask, "When will we get there?"

The ride it seems forever long,
All scrunched in the back seat
With my younger brother, Hank,
And his big, old, smelly feet.

We punch and play. I try to read.
And then, I get carsick.
We stop to get a bite for lunch,
"Don't spill it!" That's the trick.

And then at last we see the blue,
The ocean's up ahead.
We dash across the crystal sand,
And I think, "Can we come again?"

What is the main idea of this poem?

- A** The speaker's family always brings too many things to the beach.
- B** The car ride to the beach is long and difficult.
- C** The beach is not near the speaker's house.
- D** Family vacations are fun.

3.

Using the Library Computer

Many libraries today have computers to help you find books. If you need help, you can always ask the librarian. Here are a few simple steps to get you started:

1. First, you will probably have to choose the way you want to search for a book: by title, by author, or by subject. If you are looking for books on volcanoes, type "Volcanoes" in the subject area.
2. Click "Enter."
3. The computer will then show you a list of books on your subject.
4. Click on the title of the book you want to find.
5. The computer will show you information about the book, including the book's call number. The call number helps you find the book on the shelf.
6. When you are finished looking up books, return the computer screen to the beginning page for the next person to use.
7. Look for your book!

What is the purpose of this passage?

- A to remind students to return the computer to the beginning page
- B to teach students how to use the library computer system
- C to tell students what a call number is
- D to encourage students to ask the librarian for help

4.

Peter's Big Problem

Peter had a problem. He had promised his aunt he would help her get her pool ready for the summer. Last year, Peter had enjoyed working on his aunt's pool. He thought it was fun to run the underwater vacuum cleaner and sweep away the leaves from the deck. He liked testing the water with chemicals to make sure it was good to swim in. Peter knew if he helped his aunt, he would have a good summer, swimming with his friends.

Peter's problem wasn't the pool. The problem was his friends were going to the new Game Zone arcade on the same day Peter's aunt needed help with the pool. Peter and his friends had waited all winter for the arcade to open. It had all kinds of amazing virtual-reality games such as Space Cruisers and World Soccer Championships. Peter didn't know what to do.

What is the main idea of this story?

- A Peter likes cleaning his aunt's pool.
- B Peter wants to go with his friends to the new arcade.
- C Peter must choose between helping his aunt and going to the arcade with his friends.
- D The new arcade has really amazing games.

5. **Who Was William Penn?**

William Penn was the founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. In the 1600s, several countries in Europe had staked claims in North America. Britain was one of those countries, and William Penn was from Britain. In 1681, King Charles II of England gave William Penn lands in North America. Charles II was born in 1630. The king asked that these lands be named for William Penn's father, so the colony was called Pennsylvania.

William Penn arrived in the colony in 1682. Penn had very strong beliefs. He believed people should be able to worship freely. He also believed colonists should treat Native Americans fairly. Penn established a government where people had a say in the laws. These ideas were very different from the ideas in Britain at that time. Penn also helped design the layout for the city of Philadelphia. William Penn set an example of what an ideal colony could be.

What is the main idea of this passage?

- A** William Penn believed colonists should treat the American Indians fairly.
- B** King Charles II gave William Penn lands in North America.
- C** William Penn founded Pennsylvania, a colony based on beliefs very different from those in Britain.
- D** William Penn wanted people to be able to worship freely.

6. **Going to the Beach**

Do you live close to a beach?
No? Well, neither do we.
We have to travel very far
If we want to see the sea.

We pack our car with tons of stuff,
Like towels, food, and chairs.
And then we pile into the car
And ask, "When will we get there?"

The ride it seems forever long,
All scrunched in the back seat
With my younger brother, Hank,
And his big old smelly feet.

We punch and play. I try to read.
And then I get carsick.
We stop to get a bite for lunch,
"Don't spill it!" That's the trick.

And then at last we see the blue,
The ocean's up ahead.
We dash across the crystal sand,
And I think, "Can we come again?"

What is the lesson of this poem?

- A** Reading in the car is not a good idea because it might make you sick.
- B** Little brothers deserve respect, even if they have stinky feet.
- C** Sometimes it takes a long, difficult journey to arrive at a great place.
- D** Living far from the beach doesn't mean you can't go to the beach.