

Main Idea and Details

3rd Grade

The one sentence a paragraph is about, and the sentences that hold it up.

A paragraph is a table: the main idea is the top, the details are the legs.

1 READ THE WHOLE PARAGRAPH

1

You cannot find the main idea from one sentence.

2 ASK WHAT IT IS MOSTLY ABOUT

2

Not every detail — the thing they all point at.

3 SAY IT IN ONE SENTENCE

3

If it takes three, you have listed details instead.

4 CHECK THE DETAILS FIT

4

Each one should support your sentence. If one does not, rethink.

WATCH OUT

The main idea is often the first or last sentence — but not always.
A topic is one word ('bees'). A main idea is a whole sentence.

Main idea = what it is about + what it says about it. Both halves are needed.