

# READING & LISTENING FOR MAIN IDEAS

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR LOCATING MAIN IDEAS

Joan Sedita, M.Ed.\*

1. To identify a main idea that is stated, your child should first answer the questions below.
  - What is the one subject the author talks about throughout the paragraph? The answer to this question identifies the topic.
  - What is the author saying about this topic? The answer to this question identifies the main idea.
  - What details support the main idea? The answer to this question identifies the important details.

Next, your child should find and underline the topic sentence that states the main idea. If the main idea must be inferred because there is no topic sentence, your child should write out the main idea in his own words in the margin next to the paragraph.

2. To help determine the topic, your child should look for the words that are most often repeated. They help suggest the topic.
3. Your child should make sure all the details refer to the topic sentence (or his main idea in the margin if there is no stated topic sentence).
4. Your child can double-check the main idea by asking if what they have underlined or written is too general or too specific.

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