

READING & LISTENING FOR MAIN IDEAS

CATEGORIZING

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The most basic main idea task is to identify the category that applies to a list of words. For example, *fruit* is the main idea for a list that includes *apple*, *pear*, *peach*, and *banana*. The thinking process that a student uses to come up with the answer (*fruit*) includes holding one detail in working memory (*apple*) long enough to compare it to the next detail (*pear*), then determining what the two have in common. As the student adds each new detail (*peach*, *banana*), he compares it to the previous items to test against the main idea (*fruit*) for accuracy. This thinking process occurs in a millisecond. Most of us are not even aware we are following these steps. You want to explain this process to your child so he understands **how** to find the main idea.

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